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BEVIS

THE STORY OF A BOY

BY

RICHARD JEFFERIES,

AUTHOR OF "THE GAMEKEEPER AT HOME," "WILD LIFE IN A
SOUTHERN COUNTY," "THE AMATEUR POACHER," "GREENE
FERNE FARM," "HODGE AND HIS MASTERS," "ROUND
ABOUT A GREAT ESTATE," "WOOD MAGIC."

"But natures of the noblest frame
These toyles and dangers please;
And they take comfort in the same,
As much as you in ease."

Ulysses and the Syren.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,
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# BEVIS.



## CHAPTER I.

### NEW FORMOSA—BEVIS'S ZODIAC.

THEY returned to the hut and prepared the kangaroo and the fish for boiling on the morrow; the fish was to be coiled up in the saucepan, and the kangaroo in the pot. Pan had the paunch, and with his great brown eyes glaring out of his head with gluttony, made off with it to his own private larder, where, after eating his full, he buried the rest. Pan had his own private den behind a thicket of bramble, where he kept some bones of a duck, a bacon bone, and now added this to his store. Here he retired occasionally from civilization, like the king of the Polynesian island, to enjoy nature, away from the etiquette of his attendance at court on Bevis and Mark.

Next, Mark with one of the old axes they had used to excavate the store-room, cut a notch in the edge of the cave, where it opened on the hut, large enough to stand the lantern in, as the chest would be required for the raft. They raked the potatoes out of the ashes, and had them for supper, with a damper, the last fragment of a duck, and cold tea, like gold-diggers.

Bevis now recollected the journal he had proposed to keep, and got out the book, in which there was as yet only one entry, and that a single word, "Wednesday." He set it on the table under the awning, with the lantern open before him. Outside the edge of the awning the moon filled the courtyard with her light.

"Why, it's only Thursday now," said Mark. "We've only been here one full day, and it seems weeks."

"Months," said Bevis. "Perhaps this means Wednesday last year."

"Of course: this is next year to that. How we must have altered! Our friends would not know us."

"Not even our mothers," said Bevis.

"Nor our jolly old mokes and governors."

"Shot a kangaroo," said Bevis, writing; "shot

a duck and a jack—No. Are they jacks? That's such a common name?"

"No; not jacks: jack-sharks."

"No; sun-fish: they're always in the sun."

"Yes; sun-fish."

"Shot a sun-fish: saw two squirrels, and a heron, and four parrots—"

"And a kingfisher—"

"Halcyon," said Bevis, writing it down—"a beautiful halcyon; made a table and a sun-dial. I must go up presently and mark the meridian by the north star."

"Saw one savage."

"Who was that?"

"Why, Charlie."

"O yes, one savage; believe there are five thousand in the jungle on the mainland."

"Seven thousand miles from anywhere. Put it down," said Mark.

"Twenty degrees north latitude; right. There, look; half a page already!"

"We ought to wash some sand to see if there's any gold," said Mark—"in a cradle, you know."

"So we did. We ought to have looked in the duck's gizzard; tiny nuggets get in gizzards sometimes."

“ Everything goes to the river beyond the weeds,” said Mark ; “ that ought to be written.”

“ Does everything go to the river ? ”

“ Everything. While I was fishing I saw them all come back to Serendib from it.”

“ We must make haste with the raft.”

“ Like lightning,” said Mark.

“ Let me see,” said Bevis, leaning his arm on the table and stroking his hair with the end of the penholder. “ There are blue gum trees, and palms, and banyans.”

“ Reeds—they’re canes.”

“ Sedges are papyrus.”

“ The big bulrushes are bamboos.” He meant the reed mace.

“ Yes, bamboos. I’ve put it down. There ought to be a list of everything that grows here—cedars of course ; that’s something else. Huge butterflies—”

“ Very huge.”

“ Heaps of flies.”

“ And a tiger somewhere.”

“ Then there ought to be the names of all the fossils, and metals, and if there’s any coal,” said Bevis ; “ and when we have the raft we must dredge up the anemones and pearl oysters, and—”

“ And write down all the fish.”

“And everything. The language of the natives will be a bother. I must make a new alphabet for it. Look! that will do for A”—he made a tiny circle; “that’s B, two dots.”

“They gurgle in their throats,” said Mark.

“That’s a gurgle,” said Bevis, making a long stroke with a dot over and under it; “and they click with their tongues against the roofs of their mouths. No: it’s awkward to write clicks. I know: there, CK, that’s for click, and this curve under it means a tongue—the way you’re to put it to make a click.”

“Click! Click!”

“Guggle!”

“Then there’s the names of the idols,” said Mark. “We’d better find some.”

“You can cut some,” said Bevis; “cut them with your knife out of a stick, and say they’re models, as they wouldn’t let you take the real ones. The names; let’s see—Jog.”

“Hick-kag.”

“Hick-kag; I’ve put it down. Jog and Hick-kag are always quarrelling, and when they hit one another, that’s thunder. That’s what they say.”

“Noodles.”

“Natives are always noodles.”

“ But they can do one thing capital though.”

“ What’s that ? ”

“ Stick up together.”

“ How ? Why ? ”

“ If you take a hatchet and chop a big notch in them, they stick up together again directly.”

“ Join up.”

“ Like glue.”

“ Then the thing is, how did the savages get here ? Nobody has ever been here before us ; now where did they come from ? There are sure to be grand ruins in the jungle somewhere,” said Bevis, “ all carved, and covered with inscriptions.”

“ Huge trees growing on the top.”

“ Magic signs chipped out on stones, and books made of string with knots instead of writing.”

Kaak ! kaak ! A heron was descending. The unearthly noise made them look up.

“ Are there any tidal waves ? ” said Mark.

“ Sometimes—a hundred feet high. But the thing is how did they get here ? How did anybody ever get anywhere ? ”

“ It’s very crooked,” said Mark, “ very crooked : you can’t quite see it, can you ? Suppose you go and do the sun-dial : I’m sleepy.”

“ Well, go to bed ; I can do it.”

“Good night!” said Mark. “Lots of chopping to do to-morrow. We ought to have brought a grindstone for the axes. You have got the plan ready for the raft?”

“Quite ready.”

Mark went into the hut, placed the lantern in the niche, and threw himself on the bed. In half a minute he was firm asleep. Bevis went out of the courtyard, round outside the fence, and up on the cliff to the sun-dial. The stars shone brighter than it is usually thought they do when there is no moon; but in fact it is not so much the moon as the state of the atmosphere. There was no haze in the dry air, and he could see the Pole Star distinctly.

He sat down—as the post on which the dial was supported was low—on the southern side, with it between him and the north. He still had to stoop till he had got the tip of the gnomon to cover the North Star. Closing one eye, as if aiming, he then put his pencil on the dial in the circle or groove scratched by the compass. The long pencil was held upright in the groove, and moved round till it intercepted his view of the star. The tip of the gnomon, the pencil, and the Pole Star were in a direct line, in a row one behind the other.

To make sure, he raised his head and looked over the gnomon and pencil to the star, when he found that he had not been holding the pencil upright; it leaned to the east, and made an error to the west in his meridian. "It ought to be a plumb-line," he thought. "But I think it's straight now."

He stooped again, and found the gnomon and pencil correct, and pressing on the pencil hard, drew it towards him out of the groove a little way. By the moonlight when he got up he could see the mark he had left, and which showed the exact north. To-morrow he would have to draw a line from that mark straight to the gnomon, and when the shadow fell on that line it would be noon. With the fixed point of noon and the fixed point of four o'clock, he thought he could make the divisions for the rest of the hours.

The moonlight cast a shadow to the east of the noon-line, as she had crossed the meridian. Looking up, he saw the irregular circle of the moon high in the sky, so brilliant that the scored relieve work enchased upon her surface was obscured by the bright light reflected from it.

Behind him numerous lights glittered in the still water, near at hand they were sharp clean points, far away they were short bands of light drawn



towards him. Bevis went to the young oak and sat down under it. Cassiopeia fronted him, and Capella; the Northern Crown, was faint and low; but westward great Arcturus shone, though the moon had taken the redness from him. The cross of Cygnus was lying on its side as it was carried through the eastern sky; beneath it the Eagle's central star hung over the Nile. Low in the south, over the unknown river Antares, too, had lost his redness.

Up through the branches of the oak he saw Lyra, the purest star in the heavens, white as whitest and clearest light may be, gleaming at the zenith of the pale blue dome. But just above the horizon northwards there was a faint white light, the faintest aurora, as if another moon was rising there. By these he knew his position, and that he was looking the same way as if he had been gazing from the large northern window of the parlour at home, or if he had been lying on the green path by the strawberries, as he sometimes did in the summer evenings.

Then the North Star, minute but clear—so small, and yet chosen for the axle and focus of the sky, instead of sun-like Sirius—the North Star always shone just over the group of elms by the orchard.

Summer and winter, spring and autumn, it was always there, always over the elms—whether they were reddening with the buds and flowers of February, whether they were dull green now in the heats of August, whether they were yellow in October.

Dick and his Team, whose waggon goes backwards, swung round it like a stone in a sling whirled about the shoulders. Sometimes the tail of the Bear, where Dick bestrides his second horse, hung down behind the elms into the vapour of the horizon. Sometimes the Pointers were nearly overhead. If they were hidden by a cloud, the Lesser Bear gave a point; or you could draw a line through Cassiopeia, and tell the North by her chair of stars.

The comets seemed to come within the circle of Bootes—Arcturus you always know is some way beyond the tail of the Bear. The comets come inside the circle of the stars that never set. The governor had seen three or four appear there in his time, just over the elms under the Pole. Donati's, which perhaps you can remember, came there—a tiny thing twelve inches long from nucleus to tail to look at, afterwards the weird sign the world stood amazed at. Then there was another not long

after, which seemed to appear at once as a broad streak across the sky.

Like the sketches in old star-maps, it did indeed cross the whole sky for a night or two, but went too quickly for the world to awake at midnight and wonder at. Lately two more have come in the enchanted circle of the stars that never set.

All the stars from Arcturus to Capella came about the elms by the orchard; as Arcturus went down over the place of sunset in autumn, Capella began to shine over another group of elms—in the meadow to the north-east. Capella is sure to be seen, because it begins to become conspicuous just as people say the sky is star-lit as winter sends the first frost or two. But Capella is the brightest star in the northern sky in summer, and it always came up by the second or north-east group of elms.

Between these two groups of tall trees—so tall and thick that they were generally visible even on dark nights—the streamers of the Aurora Borealis shot up in winter, and between them in summer the faint reflection of the midnight sun, like the lunar dawn which precedes the rising of the moon always appeared. The real day-dawn—the white foot of Aurora—came through the sky-curtain a little to the right of the second group, and about over a

young oak in the hedge across the road, opposite the garden wall.

When the few leaves left on this young oak were brown, and rustled in the frosty night, the massy shoulder of Orion came heaving up through it—first one bright star, then another; then the gleaming girdle, and the less definite scabbard; then the great constellation stretched across the east. At the first sight of Orion's shoulder Bevis always felt suddenly stronger, as if a breath of the mighty hunter's had come down and entered into him.

He stood upright; his frame enlarged; his instep lifted him as he walked, as if he too could swing the vast club and chase the lion from his lair. The sparkle of Orion's stars brought to him a remnant of the immense vigour of the young world, the frosty air braced his sinews, and power came into his arms.

As the constellation rose, so presently new vigour too entered into the trees, the sap moved, the buds thrust forth, the new leaf came, and the nightingale travelling up from the south sang in the musical April nights. But this was when Orion was south, and Sirius flared like a night-sun over the great oak at the top of the Home Field.

Sirius rose through the young oak opposite the

garden wall, passed through a third group of elms, by the rick-yard, gleaming through the branches—hung in the spring above the great oak at the top of the Home Field, and lowered by degrees westwards behind the ashes growing at that end of the New Sea by the harbour. After it Arcturus came, and lorded the Midsummer zenith, where now lucent Lyra looked down upon him.

Up, too, through the little oak came Aldebaran the red Bull's Eye, the bent rod of Aries, and the cluster of the Pleiades. The Pleiades he loved most, for they were the first constellation he learned to know. The flickering Pleiades, the star-dusted spot in Cancer, and Leo, came in succession. Antares, the harvest-star, scarcely cleared the great oak southwards in summer. He got them all from a movable planisphere, the very best star-maps ever made, proceeding step by step, drawing imaginary lines from one to the other, as through the Pointers to the Pole, and so knew the designs on our northern dome.

He transferred them from the map to the trees. The north group of elms, the north-east group, the east oak, the south-east elms, the southern great oak, the westward ashes, the orchard itself north-west,—through these like a zodiac the stars moved,

all east to west, except the enchanted circle about the Pole. For the Bear and the Lesser Bear sometimes seemed to move from west to east when they were returning, swinging under to what would have been their place of rising.

Fixing them thus by night, he knew where many were by day; the Pole Star was always over the north elms—when the starlings stayed and whistled there before they flew to the housetop, when the rooks called there before the sun set on their way home to the jungle, when the fieldfares in the gloomy winter noon perched up there. The Pole Star was always over the elms.

In the summer mornings the sun rose north of east, between the second group of elms and the little oak—so far to the north that he came up over the vale instead of the downs. The morning beams then lit up the northern or outer side of the garden wall, and fell aslant through the narrow kitchen window, under the beam of the ceiling. In the evening the sun set again northwards of the orchard, between it and the north elms, having come round towards the place of rising, and shining again on the outside of the garden wall, so that there seemed but a few miles between. He did not sink, but only dipped, and the dawn that

travelled above him indicated his place, moving between the north and north-east elms, and overcoming the night by the little oak. The sun did not rise and sink; he travelled round an immense circle.

In the winter mornings the sun rose between the young oak and the third group of elms, red and vapour hung, and his beams presently shot through the window to the logs on the kitchen hearth. He sank then between the south-westerly ashes and the orchard, rising from the wall of the Downs, and sinking again behind it. At noon he was just over, only a little higher than the great southern oak. All day long the outer side of the garden wall was in shadow, and at night the northern sky was black to the horizon. The travelling dawn was not visible: the sun rose and sank, and was only visible through half of the great circle. The cocks crowed at four in the afternoon, and the rooks hastened to the jungle.

But by-and-by, when the giant Orion shone with his full width grasping all the sky, then in the mornings the sun's rising began to shift backwards — first to the edge of the third group of elms, then straight up the road, then to the little oak. In the afternoon, the place of setting likewise shifted

backwards to the north, and came behind the orchard. At noon he was twice as high as the southern oak, and every day at noontide the shadows gradually shortened. The nightingale sang in the musical April night, the cowslips opened, and the bees hummed over the meadows.

Last of all, the sweet turtle-doves cooed and wooed; beauteous June wearing her roses came, and the sun shone at the highest point of his great circle. Then you could not look at him unless up through the boughs of a tree. Round the zodiac of the elms, and the little oak, the great oak, the ashes, and the orchard, the sun revolved; and the house, and the garden path by the strawberries—the best place to see—were in the centre of his golden ring.

The sward on the path on which Bevis used to lie and gaze up in the summer evening, was real, and tangible; the earth under was real; and so too the elms, the oak, the ash trees, were real and tangible—things to be touched, and known to be. Now like these, the mind, stepping from the one to the other, knew and almost felt the stars to be real and not mere specks of light, but things that were there by day over the elms as well as by night, and not apparitions of the evening departing at the twittering



of the swallows. They were real, and the touch of his mind felt to them.

He could not, as he reclined on the garden path by the strawberries, physically reach to and feel the oak ; but he could feel the oak in his mind, and so from the oak, stepping beyond it, he felt the stars. They were always there by day as well as by night. The Bear did not sink, the sun in summer only dipped, and his reflection—the travelling dawn—shone above him, and so from these unravelling out the enlarging sky, he felt as well as knew that neither the stars nor the sun ever rose or set. The heavens were always around and with him. The strawberries and the sward of the garden path, he himself reclining there, were moving through, among, and between the stars ; they were as much by him as the strawberry leaves.

By day the sun, as he sat down under the oak, was as much by him as the boughs of the great tree. It was by him like the swallows.

The heavens were as much a part of life as the elms, the oak, the house, the garden and orchard, the meadow and the brook. They were no more separated than the furniture of the parlour, than the old oak chair where he sat, and saw the new moon shine over the mulberry-tree. They were

neither above nor beneath, they were in the same place with him ; just as when you walk in a wood the trees are all about you, on a plane with you, so he felt the constellations and the sun on a plane with him, and that he was moving among them as the earth rolled on, like them, with them, in the stream of space.

The day did not shut off the stars, the night did not shut off the sun ; they were always there. Not that he always thought of them, but they were never dismissed. When he listened to the green-finches sweetly calling in the hawthorn, or when he read his books, poring over the *Odyssey*, with the sunshine on the wall, they were always there ; there was no severance. Bevis lived not only out to the finches and the swallows, to the far-away hills, but he lived out and felt out to the sky.

It was living, not thinking. He lived it, never thinking, as the finches live their sunny life in the happy days of June. There was magic in everything, blades of grass and stars, the sun and the stones upon the ground.

The green path by the strawberries was the centre of the world, and round about it by day *and* night the sun circled in a magical golden ring.

Under the oak on New Formosa that warm

summer night, Bevis looked up as he reclined at the white pure light of Lyra, and forgot everything but the consciousness of living, feeling up to and beyond it. The earth and the water, the oak, went away; he himself went away: his mind joined itself and was linked up through ethereal space to its beauty.

Bevis, as you know did not think: we have done the thinking, the analysis for him. He felt and was lost in the larger consciousness of the heavens.

The moon moved, and with it the shadow of the cliff on the water beneath, a planet rose eastwards over their new Nile, water-fowl clucked as they flew over.

Kaak! Kaak! Another heron called and his discordant piercing yell sounded over the water, seeming to penetrate to the distant and shadowy shores. The noise awoke him, and he went down to the hut. Mark was firm asleep, the lantern burned in the niche; Pan had been curled up by the bedside, but lifted his head and wagged his tail, thumping the floor as he entered. Bevis let down the curtain closing the doorway, put out the lantern, and in three minutes was as firm as Mark. After some time, Pan rose quietly and went out, slipping under the curtain, which fell back into its place when he had passed.

## CHAPTER II.

## NEW FORMOSA—THE RAFT.

THEY did not get up till the sun was high, and when Mark lifted the curtain a robin flew from the table just outside, where he had been picking up the crumbs, across to the gate-post in the stockade. The gate had not been shut—Pan was lying by it under the fence, which cast a shadow in the morning and evening.

“Pan!” said Mark; the lazy spaniel wagged his tail, but did not come.

“I shall go and finish the sun-dial while you get the breakfast,” said Bevis. It was Mark’s turn to-day, and as he went out at the gate he stooped and patted Pan, who looked up with speaking affection in his eyes, and stretched himself to his full length in utter lassitude.

Bevis drew the line from the gnomon to the mark he had made the night before, this was the noon or

meridian. Then he drew another from the mark where the shadow had fallen at four o'clock in the afternoon. The space between the two he divided into four equal divisions and drew lines for one, two, and three o'clock. They were nearly two inches apart, and having measured them exactly he added four more beyond, up to eight o'clock, as he thought the sun set about eight; and then seven more on the other side where the shadow would fall in the morning, as he supposed the sun rose about five.

His hours, therefore, ranged from five till eight, and he added half lines to show the half-hours. When it was done the shadow of the gnomon touched the nine, so he shouted to Mark that it was nine o'clock. He knew that his dial was not correct, because the hour lines ought to be drawn so as to show the time every day of the year, and his would only show it for a short while.

How often he had drawn a pencil-mark along the edge of the shadow on the window-frame in the south window of the parlour! In the early spring, while the bitter east wind raged, he used to sit in the old oak chair at the south window, where every now and then the warm sunshine fell from a break in the ranks of the marching clouds. Out of the wind the March sun was warm and pleasant, and while it

lasted he dreamed over his books, his *Odyssey*, his *Faust*, his *Quixote*, his Shakespeare's poems.

About eleven the sunshine generally came, and he drew a line on the frame to mark the hour. But in two days the verge of the shadow had gone on, and at eleven left the pencil-mark behind. He marked it again and again, it went on as the sun, coming up higher and higher, described a larger ring. So with his pencil-lines on the window-frame he measured the spring and graduated the coming of summer, till the eggs in the goldfinch's nest in the apple-tree were hard set. From this he knew that his sun-dial was not correct, for as the sun now each day described a circle slightly less than before, the shadow too would change and the error increase. Still the dial would divide the day for them, and they could work and arrange their plans by it.

Had they had the best chronometer ever made it would have been of no further use. All time is artificial, and their time was correct to them.

Mark shouted that breakfast was ready, so he went down, and they sat at the table under the awning.

"Pan's been thieving," said Mark. "There was half a damper on the table last night, and it was gone

this morning, and two potatoes which we left, and I put the skin of the kangaroo on the fence, and that's gone—”

“He couldn't eat the skin, could he?” said Bevis. “Pan, come here, sir.”

“Look at him,” said Mark, “he's stuffed so full he can hardly crawl—if he was hungry he would come quick.”

“So he would. Pan, you old rascal! What have you done with the kangaroo skin, sir?”

Pan wagged his tail and looked from one to the other; the sound of their voices was stern, but he detected the goodwill in it, and that they were not really angry.

“And the damper?”

“And the potatoes? And just as if you could eat leather and fur, sir!”

Pan put his fore-paws on Bevis's knee, and looked up as if he had done something very clever.

“Pooh! Get away,” said Bevis, “you're a false old rascal. Mark, cut him some of that piece of bacon presently.”

“So I will—and I'll put the things higher up,” said Mark. “I'll drive some nails into the posts and make a shelf, then you'll be done, sir.”

Pan, finding there was nothing more for him to

eat, walked slowly back to the fence and let himself fall down.

“Too lazy to lie down properly,” said Bevis.

After breakfast they put up the shelf, and placed the eatables on it out of Pan’s reach, and then taking their towels started for their bath.

“It might have been a rat,” said Mark; “that looks gnawn.” He kicked the jack’s head which had been cut off, being shattered with the shot, and thrown down outside the gate. “But Pan’s very full, else he would come,” for the spaniel did not follow as usual. So soon as they had gone the robin returned to the table, took what he liked, ventured into the hut for a minute, and then perched on the fence above Pan before returning to the wood.

Bevis and Mark swam and waded to Serendib again. There was a light ripple this morning from the south-east, and a gentle breeze which cooled the day. They said they would hasten to construct the raft, so as to be able to shoot the waterfowl, but Bevis wanted first to try the matchlock with ball now he had fitted it with a sight. He fired three times at the teak-tree, to which Mark pinned a small piece of paper as a bull’s-eye, and at thirty yards he hit the tree very well, but not the paper.



The bullets were all below, the nearest about four inches from the bull's-eye. Still it was much better shooting.

He then loaded the gun with shot, and took it and a hatchet—the two were a good load—intending to look in the wood for suitable timber, and keep the gun by him for a possible shot at something. But just as he had got ready, and Pan shaking himself together began to drag his idle body after him, he thought Mark looked dull. It was Mark's turn to cook, and he had already got the fire alight under the teak.

“I won't go,” he said; “I'll stop and help you. Things are stupid by yourself.”

“Fishing is very stupid by yourself,” said Mark.

“Let's make a rule,” said Bevis. “Everybody helps everybody instead of going by themselves.”

“So we will,” said Mark, only too glad, and the new rule was agreed to, but as they could not both shoot at once, it was understood that in this the former contract was to stand, and each was to have the matchlock a day to himself. The pot and the saucepan, with the kangaroo and the jack were soon on, and they found that boiling had one

great advantage over roasting, they could pile on sticks and go away for some time, instead of having to watch and turn the roast.

They found a good many small trees and poles such as they wanted not far from home, and among the rest three dead larches which had been snapped by a tornado. These dry trees were lighter and would float better than green timber. For the larger beams, or foundation of the raft, they chose aspen and poplar, and for the cross-joists firs, and by dinner-time they had collected nearly enough.

It was half-past one by the sun-dial when Mark began to prepare the table; Bevis had gone to haul the catamaran planks up to the place where the raft was to be built. Under one of the planks, as he turned it over, there was a little lizard; the creature at first remained still as if dead, then not being touched ran off quickly, grasping the grass sideways with its claws as a monkey grasps a branch. With the end of a plank under each arm Bevis hauled these across to the other materials.

This time they had a nicer meal than any they had prepared: fish and game; the kangaroo was white and juicy, almost as white as a chicken, as a young summer rabbit is if cooked soon after it is shot. It is the only time indeed when a rabbit does

not taste like a rabbit. If you tasted a young one fresh shot in summer, you would not care to eat them in winter, and discover that the frost improvement theory is an invention of poulterers who cannot keep their stock unless it is bitterly cold. There was sufficient left for supper, and a bone or two for Pan. The chopping they had done made them idle, and they agreed not to work again till the evening; they lounged about like Pan till the time appointed to look for Charlie's signal.

When they went up on the cliff it was a quarter-past three by the dial, so they sat down in the shade of the oak where the brambles behind would prevent their being seen against the sky line. After awhile Mark crept on all fours to the sun-dial, and said it was half-past three, and suddenly exclaimed that the time was going backwards.

The shadow of the gnomon slipped the wrong way; he looked up and saw a light cloud passing over the sun. Bevis had often seen the same thing in March, sitting by the southern window, when the shadow ran back from his pencil-line on the window-frame as the clouds began again to cover up the blue roof. Charlie was rather late to day, but he gave the signal according to promise: they saw him look a long while and then move away.

Presently, while Mark was preparing the tea, Bevis got the matchlock to practise again. They were always ready for tea, and it is a curious fact that those who live much out of doors and work hard, like gold-diggers abroad, and our own reapers at home labouring among the golden wheat, prefer it to anything while actually engaged and in the midst of their toil; but not afterwards.

Bevis set up the rest in the gateway of the stockade, and took aim at the piece of paper pinned on the teak-tree, which was between fifty and sixty yards distant. Twice he fired and missed the teak: then he let Mark try, and Mark also missed; and a third time he fired himself. None of the four bullets struck either the tree or the branches; so, though they could hit it at thirty yards, they could not rely on their gun at sixty.

Directly after tea they began to work again at the preparations for the raft, cutting some more poles and sawing up those they had already into the proper lengths. Sawing is very hard work, causing a continual strain upon the same muscles, with no change of position as possible while chopping, and they were obliged to do it by shifts, one working so long and then the other. The raft was to be twelve feet long and five wide. The beams for the founda-

tion gave them most trouble to procure, being largest, and not every tree was exactly the size they wished.

They laboured on into the moonlight, which grew brighter every night as the moon increased, and did not cease till all the materials were ready ; the long beams of aspen and poplar placed side by side (on rollers) and near these short cross-pieces of fir with holes bored for the nails, then a row of long fir poles, and the short lengths of plank to form the deck. Everything was just ready for fitting together. It cost them some self-denial to wait till all was thus prepared instead of at once beginning to nail the frame together.

There is something in driving in a nail tempting to the wrist ; when the board is ready, the gimlet-hole made, and the hammer at hand, the physical mind desires to complete the design. They resisted it, because they knew that they should really complete the raft much quicker by getting every portion of the frame ready before commencing to fix it. They did not recognize how tired they were till they started for the hut ; their backs, so long bent over the sawing, had stiffened in that position, and pained them as they straightened the sinews to stand upright ; their fingers were crooked from continually

grasping the handles ; they staggered about as they walked, for their stiff limbs were not certain of foothold, and jerked them where the ground was uneven.

Mark sat down to light the fire in the courtyard, for they wanted some more tea ; Bevis sat by him. They were dog-tired. Looking in the larder to lay out the supper, Mark saw the mushrooms which had been forgotten ; he hunted out the grid-iron, and put two handfuls of them on. Now the sight of these savoury mushrooms raised their fainting spirits more than the most solid food, and they began to talk again. While these were doing, Bevis cut Pan a slice of the cooked bacon on the shelf ; it was rather fat, and pampered Pan, after mumbling it over in his chops, carried it just outside the fence, and came back trying to look as if he had eaten it.

With the mushrooms they made a capital supper, but they were still very tired. Bevis got out his journal, but he only wrote down "Friday," and then put it away, remarking that he must soon write a letter home. Even cards could not amuse them, they were so tired ; but the cry of a heron roused Bevis a little, and he took the matchlock and loaded it with shot, to see if he could shoot it and get the plumes.

“Heron’s plumes were thought a good deal of in our day where we lived, you know. Didn’t the knights use to wear them?” he said. “Hérons are very hard to shoot.”

Mark came with him and the spaniel, and they walked softly down the path, now well-worn, and peered over the moonlit water, but the heron was not on the island, nor in sight. He was probably on some of the lesser islets among the shallows, so they returned home and immediately went to bed, quite knocked up. Pan curled round by the bedside for about an hour, then he got up and slipped out under the curtain into the moonlight.

In the morning when they went to bathe there was a mist over the water, which curled along and gathered thicker in places, once quite hiding Serendib, and then clearing away and drawing towards the unknown river. The water was very warm.

They then began to nail the raft together. On the long thick beams they placed short cross-pieces of fir close together and touching; over these long poles of fir lengthways, also touching; lastly, short planks across making the deck. There were thus four layers, for they knew that rafts sink a good deal and float deep, especially when the wood is

green, as you may see a bough, or a tree trunk in the brook quite half immersed as it goes by on the current. It was built on rollers, because Bevis, consulting his book, read how Ulysses rigged his vessel :—

And roll'd on levers, launch'd her in the deep.

And, reflecting, he foresaw that the raft being so heavy would be otherwise difficult to move.

The spot where they had built her was a little below where Bevis leaped on shore on the evening of the battle. The ground sloped to the water, which was rather deep. By noon the raft was ready—for they had decided to complete the rigging, bulwarks, and fittings when she was afloat—and with levers they began to heave her down.

She moved slowly, rumbling and crushing the rollers into the sward. By degrees with a “Yeo! Heave-ho!” at which Pan set up a barking, the raft approached the water, and the forward part entered it. The weight of the rest prevented the front from floating, forcing it straight under the surface till the water rose a third of the way along the deck.

“Yeo! Heave-ho!”

Yow-wow-wow! Pan, who had been idle all the



morning lying on the ground, jumped, round and joined the chorus.

“ Now! Heave-ho! She’s going! Now!”

“ Stop!”

“ Why?”

“ She’ll slip away—right out!”

“ So she will.”

“ Run for a rope.”

“ All right.”

Mark ran for a piece of cord from the hut. The raft as it were hung on the edge more than half in and heaving up as the water began to float her, and they saw that if they gave another push she would go out and the impetus of her weight would carry her away from the shore out of reach. Mark soon returned with the cord, which was fastened to two stout nails.

“ Ready?”

“ Go!”

One strong heave with the levers and the raft slid off the last roller, rose to the surface, the water slipping off the deck each side, and floated. Seizing the cord as it ran out, they brought her to, and Mark instantly jumped on board. He danced and kicked up his heels—Pan followed him and ran round the edge of the raft, sniffing over at the water.

The raft floated first-rate, and the deck, owing to the three layers under it, was high above the surface. These layers, too, gave the advantage that they could walk to the very verge without depressing it to the water. Mark got off and held the cord while Bevis got on, then they both shouted, "Serendib!"

They pushed off with long poles, like punting, Pan swam out so soon as they had started, and was hauled on board. A short way from shore the channel was so deep the poles would not reach the bottom, but the raft had weigh on her and continued to move, and paddling with the poles they kept up the slow movement till they reached the shallows. Thence to Serendib they poled along, one each side. The end of the raft crashed in among the willow boughs, and the jerk as it grounded almost threw them down. Pan leaped off directly, and they followed, fastening the raft by the cord or painter to the willows.

"Nothing but blue gums," said Mark, who led the way. "What are these?" pointing to the wild parsnips or "gix" which rose as high as their heads, with hollow-jointed stalks and broad heads of minute white flowers.

"It's a new kind of bamboo," said Bevis. "Listen! Pan's hunting out the moorhens again."

This is some kind of spice—you sniff—the air is heavy with the scent, just as it always is in the tropics.”

As they pushed along they shook the meadow-sweet flowers which grew very thickly, and the heavy perfume rose up. In a willow stole or blue gum Mark found the nest of a sedge bird, but empty, the young birds hatched long since.

“Mind you don’t step on a crocodile,” said Mark, “you can’t see a bit.”

The ground was so matted with vegetation that their feet never touched the earth at all, they trampled on grasses, rushes, meadow-sweet, and triangular fluted carex sedges. Sometimes they approached the shore and saw several empty nests of moorhens and coots, but just above the level of the water. Sometimes their uncertain course led them in the interior to avoid thickets of elder. If they paused a moment they could hear the rustling as water-fowl rushed away. Pan had gone beyond hearing now. Presently they came on a small pool surrounded with sedges—a black-headed bunting watched them from a branch opposite.

“No fish,” said Bevis: they could see the bottom of the shallow water. “Hérons and king-fishers have had them of course.”

Crashing through the new bamboos they at last reached the southern extremity of the island, where the shallow sea was covered with the floating leaves of weeds, over which blue dragon-flies flew to and fro.

“Everything’s gone to the river again,” said Mark; “and where’s Pan? He’s gone too, I dare say.”

A short bark in that direction in a few minutes made them look at an islet round which reed-mace rose in a tall fringe, and there was Pan creeping up out of the weeds, dragging his body after him on to the firm ground. He set up a great yelping on the islet.

“Something’s been there,” said Bevis. “Perhaps it’s the thing that makes the curious wave. Pan! Pan!”—whistling. Pan would not come: he was too excited. “We must come here in the evening,” said Bevis, “and make an ambush. There’s heaps of moorhens.”

As there was nothing else to see on Serendib they worked a way between the blue gums back to the raft, and re-embarked for New Formosa. Just before they landed Pan dashed into the water from Serendib and swam to them. He did not seem quite himself, he looked as if he had

done something out of the common and could not tell them.

“Was it a crocodile?” said Mark, stroking him. Pan whined, as much as to say, “I wish I could tell you,” and then to give vent to his excitement he rushed into the wood.

## CHAPTER III.

## NEW FORMOSA—NO HOPE OF RETURNING.

AFTER fastening the raft they returned towards the hut, for they were hungry now, and knew it was late, when Pan set up such a tremendous barking that they first listened, and then went to see. The noise led them to the green knoll where the rabbit burries were, and they saw Pan running round under the great oak, thickly grown with ivy, in which Bevis had seen the wood-pigeons alight.

They went to the oak, it was very large and old, the branches partly dead and hung with ivy; they walked round and examined the ground, but could see no trace of anything. Mark hurled a fragment of a dead bough up into the ivy, it broke and came rustling down again, but nothing flew out. There did not seem to be anything in the tree.

“The squirrels,” said Bevis, suddenly remembering.

“Why, of course,” said Mark. “How stupid of us—Pan, you’re a donk.”

They left the oak and again went homewards: now Pan had been quite quiet while they were looking on the ground and up into the tree, but directly he understood that they had given up the search he set up barking again and would not follow. At the hut Bevis went in to cut some rashers from the bacon which had not been cooked and Mark ran up on the cliff to see the time.

It was already two o’clock—the work on the raft and the voyage to Serendib had taken up the morning. Bevis showed Mark where some mice had gnawn the edge of the uncooked bacon which had been lying in the store-room on the top of a number of things. Mark said once he found a tomtit on the shelf pecking at the food they had left there, just like a tomtit’s impudence!

“Rashers are very good,” said Bevis, “if you haven’t got to cook them.” It was his turn, and he was broiling himself as well as the bacon.

“Macaroni eats his raw,” said Mark. They had often seen John Young eating thick slices of raw bacon in the shed as he sat at luncheon. “Horrible cannibal—he’s worse than Pan, who won’t touch it cooked.”

He looked outside the gate—there was the slice of the cooked bacon Bevis had cut for the spaniel lying on the ground. Pan had not even taken the trouble to put it in his larder. But something else had gnawn at it.

“A rat’s been here,” said Mark. “Don’t you remember the jack’s head?”

“And mice in the cave,” said Bevis

“And a tomtit on the shelf.”

“And a robin on the table.”

“And a wagtail was in the court yesterday.”

“A wren comes on the stockade.”

“Spiders up there,” said Mark, pointing to the corner of the hut where there was a web.

“Tarantulas,” said Bevis, “and mosquitoes in the evening.”

“Everything comes to try and eat us up,” said Mark.

The moment man takes up his residence all the creatures of the wood throng round him, attracted by the crumbs from his hand, or the spoil that his labour affords. Hawks dart down on his poultry, weasels creep in to the hen’s eggs, mice traverse the house, rats hasten round the sty, snakes come in for the milk, spiders for the flies, flies for the sugar, toads crawl into the cellar, snails trail up the



wall, gnats arrive in the evening, robins, wrens, tomtits, wagtails enter the courtyard, starlings and sparrows nest in the roof, swallows in the chimney, martins under the eaves, rabbits in the garden among the potatoes—a favourite cover with all game—blackbirds to the cherry-trees, bullfinches to the fruit-buds, tomtits take the very bees even, cats and dogs are a matter of course, still they live on man's labour.

The sandy spot by the cliff had not been frequented by anything till the cave was made and the hut built, and already the mice were with them, and while Mark was saying that everything came to eat them up a wasp flew under the awning and settled on the table.

“Frances ought to do this,” said Bevis, hot and cross, as amateur cooks always are. “Here, give me some mushrooms, they'll be nice. Don't you wish she was here?”

“Frances!” said Mark in a tone of horror. “No, that I don't!”

In the afternoon they did nothing but wait for Charlie's signal, which he faithfully gave, and then they idled about till tea. Pan did not come back till tea, and then he wagged his tail and looked very mysterious.

“What have you been doing, sir?” said Bevis. Pan wagged and wagged and gobbled up all the buttered damper they gave him.

“Now, just see,” said Mark. He got up and cut a slice of the cold half-cooked bacon from the shelf. Pan took it, rolled his great brown eyes, showing the whites at the corners, wagged his tail very short like the pendulum of a small clock, and walked outside the gate with it. Then he came back and begged for more buttered damper.

After tea they worked again at the raft, putting in the bulwarks and carried the chest down to it for the locker. For a sail they meant to use the rug which was now hung up for an awning, and to put up a roof thatched with sedges in its place. The sun sank before they had finished, and they then got the matchlock—it was Mark’s day—and went into ambush by the glade to see if they could shoot another rabbit. Pan had to be tied and hit once or twice, he wanted to race after the squirrels.

They sat quiet in ambush till they were weary, and the moon was shining brightly, but the rabbits did not venture out. The noise Pan had made barking after the squirrels had evidently alarmed them, and they could not forget it.

“Very likely he’s been scratching at the burries

too," whispered Bevis, as the little bats flew round the glade, passing scarcely a yard in front of them like large flies. "He shan't leave us again like he did this afternoon."

It was of no use to stay there any longer, so they went quietly round the shore of the island, and seeing something move at the edge of the weeds, though they could not distinguish what, for the willow boughs hung over, Mark aimed and fired. At the report they heard water-fowl scuttling away, and running to the spot Pan brought out two moorhens, one quite dead and the other wounded.

"There," said Bevis, "you've shot every single thing."

"Well, why don't you use shot?—you'll never kill anything with bullets."

"But I will," said Bevis; "I will hit something with bullets. The people in India can hit a sparrow, why can't I? It's my turn to-morrow."

But after supper, bringing out his journal, he found to-morrow was Sunday.

"No, I can't shoot till Monday. Mamma would not like shooting on Sunday."

"No—nor chopping."

"No," said Bevis, "we musn't do any work."

All the while they were on the island they were,

in principle, disobedient, and crossing the wishes of the home authorities. Yet they resolved not to shoot on the Sunday, because the people at home would not like it. When Bevis had entered the launching of the raft and the voyage to Serendib in the journal, they skinned the moorhens and prepared them for cooking.

“This cooking is horrible,” said Mark.

“Hateful,” said Bevis; “I told you we ought to have Frances.”

“O! no; she would want her own way. She wants everything just as she likes, and if she can't have it, she won't do anything.”

“There, it's done,” said Bevis. “What we want is a slave.”

“Of course—two or three slaves, to work and chop wood, and fetch the water.”

“Hit them if they don't,” said Bevis.

“Like we hit Pan.”

“Tie them to a tree and lash them.”

“Hard.”

“Harder.”

“Great marks on their backs.”

“Howling!”

“Jolly!”

They played two games at bezique under the

awning, and drank the last drop of sherry mixed with water.

“Everything’s going,” said Bevis. “There’s no more sherry, and more than half the flour’s gone, and Pan had the last bit of butter on the damper at tea—”

“There ought to be roots on the island,” said Mark. “People eat roots on islands.”

“Don’t think there are any here,” said Bevis. “This island is too old for any to grow ; it’s like Australia, a kind of grey-bearded place with nothing but kangaroos.”

Soon afterwards they drew down the curtain and went to sleep. As usual, Pan waited till they were firm asleep, and then slipped out into the moonlight. He was lounging in the courtyard when they got up. By the sun-dial it was eight, and having had breakfast, and left the fire banked up under ashes—wood embers keep alight a long time like that—they went down to bathe.

“How quiet it is !” said Mark. “I believe it’s quieter.”

“It does seem so,” said Bevis.

The still water glittered under the sun as the light south-east air drew over it, and they could hear a single lark singing on the mainland, somewhere out of sight.

“Somehow we can swim ever so much better here than we used to at home,” said Mark, as they were dressing again.

“Ever so much,” said Bevis; “twice as far.” This was a fact, whether from the continuous outdoor life, or from greater confidence now they were entirely alone.

“How I should like to punch somebody!” said Mark, hitting out his fist.

“My muscles are like iron,” said Bevis, holding out his arm.

“Well, they are hard,” said Mark, feeling Bevis’s arm. So were his own.

“It’s living on an island,” said Bevis. “There’s no bother, and nobody says you’re not to do anything.”

“Only there’s the potatoes to clean. What a nuisance they are!”

They began to dimly perceive that, perhaps, after all, women might be of some use on the earth. They had to go back to the hut to get the dinner ready.

“The rats have been at the potatoes,” said Bevis. “Just look!”

Mark came, and saw where something had gnawn the potatoes.

“And lots are gone,” he said. “I’m sure there’s a lot gone since yesterday.”

“Pan, why don't you kill the rats?” cried Bevis. Pan looked up, as much as to say, “Teach me my business, indeed.”

“Bother!” said Mark.

“Bother!” said Bevis.

“Hateful!”

“Yah!” They flung down knives and potatoes.

“Would the raft be wrong on Sunday?”

“Not if it was only a little bit,” said Bevis.

“Just to Pearl Island?”

“No—that wouldn't hurt.”

“Let the cooking stop.”

“Come on.”

Away they ran to the raft, and pushed off, making Pan come with them, that he should not disturb the rabbits again. The spaniel was so lazy, he would not even follow them till he was compelled. He sat gravely on the raft by the chest, or locker, while they poled along the shore, for it was too deep to pole in the middle of the channel. But at the southern end of New Formosa the water shoaled, and they could leave the shore. One standing one side, and one the other, they thrust the raft along out among the islets, till they reached Pearl Island, easily distinguished by the glittering mussel shells.

A summer snipe left the islet as they came near,

circled round, and approached again, but finding they were still there, sought another strand. Pan ran round the islet, sniffing at the water's edge, and then, finding nothing, returned to the raft and sat down on his haunches. The water on one side of Pearl Island was not more than four or five inches deep a long way out, and it was from this shelving sand that the crows got the mussels. They carried them up on the bank and left the shells, which fell over open, and the wind blew the sand into them. They found one very large shell, a span long, and took it as spoil.

There was nothing else but a few small fossils like coiled snakes turned to stone. Next they poled across to the islet off the extremity of Serendib, where Pan had made such a noise. To get there they had to go some distance round, as it was so shallow. They poled the raft in among the reed-mace or bamboos, which rose above their heads out of the water besides that part of the stalk under the surface. The reed-mace is like a bulrush, but three times as tall, and larger. They cut a number of these as spoils, and then landed. Pan showed a little more activity here, but not much. He sniffed round the water's edge, but soon returned and stretched himself on the raft.



“He can’t smell anything here to-day,” said Bevis. “There’s a halcyon.”

A kingfisher went by, straight for New Formosa. The marks of moorhens’ feet were numerous on the shore and just under water, showing how calm it had been lately, for waves would have washed up the bottom and covered them. The islet was very small, merely the ridge of a bank, so they pushed off again. Passing the bamboos, they paused and looked at them—the tall stalks rose up around as if they were really in a thicket of bamboo.

“Hark!”

They spoke together. It was the stern and solemn note of a bell tolling. It startled them in the silence of the New Sea. The sound came from the hills, and they knew at once it was the bell at the church big Jack went to. The chimes, thin perhaps and weak, had been lost in the hills, but the continuous toll of the five minutes bell penetrated through miles of air. So in the bush men call each other by constantly repeating the same hollow note, “cooing,” and in that way the human voice can be heard at an extraordinary distance. Each wave of sound drives on its predecessor, and is driven by the wave that follows, till the widening circle strikes the shore of the distant ear.

“Ship’s bell,” said Bevis presently, as they listened. “In these latitudes the air is so clear you hear ships’ bells a hundred miles.”

“Pirates?”

“No; pirates would not make a noise.”

“Frigate?”

“Most likely.”

“Any chance of our being taken off and rescued?”

“Not the least,” said Bevis. “These islands are not down on any chart. She’ll be two hundred miles away by tea-time. Bound for Kerguelen, perhaps.”

“We shall never be found,” said Mark. “No hope for us.”

“No hope at all,” said Bevis. They poled towards Serendib, intending to circumnavigate that island. By the time they had gone half-way, the bell ceased.

“Now listen,” said Mark. “Isn’t it still?”

They had lifted their poles from the water, and there was not a sound (the lark had long finished), nothing but the drip, drip of the drops from the poles, and the slight rustle as the heavy raft dragged over a weed. They could almost hear the silence, as in the quiet night sometimes, if listening intently,

you may hear a faint rushing, the sound of your own blood reverberating in the hollow of the ear; in the day it needs a shell to collect it.

“It is very curious,” said Bevis. “But we have not heard a sound of anybody till that bell.”

“No more we have.”

There had been sounds quite audible, but absorbed in their island life they had not heard them. To-day they were not busy. The recognition of the silence which the bell had caused seemed to widen the distance between them and home.

“We are a long way from home—really,” said Bevis.

“Awful long way.”

“But really?”

“Of course—really. It feels farther to-day.”

They could touch the bottom with their poles all the way round Serendib, but as before, in crossing to New Formosa, had to give a stronger push on the edge of the deep channel, to carry them over to the shallower water. It was too late now to cook the moorhens, and they resolved to be contented with rashers, and see if they could not get some more mushrooms. Directly they got near the hut, Pan rushed inside the fence and began barking. When they reached the place he was sniffing round,

and every now and then giving a sharp short bark, as if he knew there was something, but could not make it out.

“Rats,” said Mark, “and they’ve taken the bacon bits Pan left outside the gate.”

Pan did not trouble any more when they came in. After preparing the rashers, and looking at the sun-dial, by which it was noon, Bevis went to look for mushrooms on the knoll, while Mark managed the dinner. Bevis had to go round to get to the knoll, and not wishing to disturb the rabbits more than necessary, made Pan keep close to his heels.

But when he reached the open glade, Pan broke away, and rushing towards the ivy-clad oak, set up a barking. Bevis angrily called him, but Pan would not come, so he picked up a stick, but instead of returning to heel, Pan dashed into the underwood, and Bevis could hear him barking a long way across the island. He thought it was the squirrels, and looked about for mushrooms. There were plenty, and he soon filled his handkerchief. As he approached the hut, Mark came to meet him, and said that happening to look on the shelf he had missed the piece of cooked bacon left there,—had Bevis moved it?

## CHAPTER IV.

NEW FORMOSA—SOMETHING HAS BEEN TO THE HUT.

“No,” said Bevis. “I left it there last night; don’t you remember I cut a piece for Pan, and he would not eat it?”

“Yes; well, it’s gone. Come and see.”

They went to the shelf—the cooked bacon was certainly gone; nor was it on the ground or in any other part of the hut or cave.

“Pan must have dragged it down,” said Bevis; “and yet it’s too high, and besides, he didn’t care for it.”

“He could not jump so high,” said Mark. “Besides, he has been with us all the time.”

“So he has.” They had kept Pan close by them, ever since he disturbed the kangaroos so much. “Then, it could not have been Pan.”

“And I don’t see how rats could climb up, either,” said Mark. “The posts” (to which the shelf was fixed) “are upright—”

“Mice can run up the leg of a chair,” said Bevis.

“That’s only a short way; this is—let me see—why it’s higher than your shoulder.”

“If it was not Pan, nor rats, what could it be?” said Bevis.

“Something’s been here,” said Mark; “Pan could smell it when he came in.”

“Something was up in the oak,” said Bevis, “and now he’s gone racing right to the other end of the island.”

“Something took the bit of bacon on the ground.”

“And gnawed the jack’s head.”

“And had the piece of damper.”

“And took the potatoes.”

“Took the potatoes twice—the cooked ones and the raw ones.”

“It’s very curious.”

“I don’t believe Pan could have jumped up—he would have shaken the other things off the shelf, too, if he had got his great paws on.”

“It must have been something,” said Bevis; “things could not go off by themselves.”

“There’s something in the island we don’t know,” said Mark, nodding his head up and down, as was his way at times when upset or full of an idea.

“Lions!” said Bevis. “Lions could get up.

“ We should have heard them roar.”

“ Tigers ? ”

“ They would have killed Pan.”

“ But you think there’s one in the reeds.”

“ Yes, but he did not come here.”

“ Boas ? ”

“ No.”

“ Panthers ? ”

“ No.”

“ Something out of the curious wave you saw ? ”

“ Perhaps. Well, it *is* curious now, isn’t it ? ” said Mark. “ Just think ; first, Pan could not have had it, and then rats could not have had it, but it’s gone.”

“ Pan, Pan,” shouted Bevis sternly, as the spaniel came in at the gateway hesitatingly ; “ come here.” The spaniel crouched, knowing that he should have a thrashing.

“ See if anything’s bitten him,” said Mark. “ What have you been after, sir ? ”

He examined Pan carefully ; there were no signs of a fight on him—nothing but cleavers or the seeds of goose-grass clinging to his coat. Bang—thump—thump ! yow ! Pan had his thrashing, and crept after them to and fro, not even daring to curl himself up in a corner, but dragging himself along on the ground behind them.

“Think,” said Mark, as he turned the mushrooms on the gridiron; “now, what was it?”

“Not a fox?” said Bevis.

“No; foxes would not swim out here; there are plenty of rabbits for them in the jungle on the mainland.”

“Nor eagles?”

“No.”

“Might be a cat.”

“But there are no cats on the island, and, besides, cats would not take bacon when there were the two moorhens on the shelf.”

“No; Pan would have had the moorhens too, if it had been him.”

“So would anything, and that’s why it’s so curious.”

“Nobody could have come here, could they?” said Bevis. “The punt’s at the bottom, and the Pinta’s chained up—”

“And we must have seen them if they swam off.”

“Nobody can swim,” said Bevis, “except you and me and the governor.”

“No,” said Mark, “no more they can—not even Big Jack.”

“Nobody in all the place but us. It could not



have been the governor, because if he found the hut he would have stopped to see who lived in it."

"Of course he would. And besides, he could not have come without our knowing it; we are always about."

"Always about," said Bevis, "and we should have seen footsteps."

"Or heard a splashing."

"And Pan would not bark at him," said Bevis. "No, it could not have been any one; it must have been something."

"Something," repeated Mark.

"And very likely out of your magic wave."

"But what *could* it be out of the wave?"

"I can't think; something magic. It doesn't matter."

They had dinner, and then, as usual, went up on the cliff to wait for Charlie's signal.

"I shall try and catch some perch to-morrow," said Mark, "if there's any wind. We're always eating the same thing."

"Every day," said Bevis, "and the cooking is the greatest hatefulness ever known."

"Takes up so much time."

"Makes you hot and horrid."

"Vile."

“It wants Frances, as I said.”

“No, thank you; I wish Jack would have her.”

Mark looked through the telescope for Charlie, and then swept the shores of the New Sea.

“How could anything get to our island?” he said. “Nothing could get to it.”

From the elevation of the cliff they saw and felt the isolation of their New Formosa.

“It was out of your magic wave,” said Bevis; “something magic.”

“But you put the wizard’s foot on the gate?”

“So I did, but perhaps I did not draw it quite right; I’ll do it again. But rats are made to gnaw the lines off sometimes, and let magic things in.”

“Draw another in ink.”

“So I will. There’s a sea-swallow.”

“There’s two.”

“There’s four or five.”

The white sea-swallows passed them, going down the water, coming from the south. They flew a few yards above the surface, in an irregular line—an easy flight, so easy they scarcely seemed to know where each flap of the wing would carry them.

“There will be a storm.”

“A tornado.”

“Not yet—the sky’s clear.”

“But we must keep a watch, and be careful how we sail on the raft.”

The appearance of the sea-swallow or terne in inland waters is believed, like that of the gull, to indicate tempest, though the sea-swallows usually come in the finest of weather.

“There’s Charlie. There are two—three,” said Mark, snatching up the telescope. “It’s Val and Cecil. Charlie’s waving his handkerchief.”

“There, it’s all right,” said Bevis.

“They are pointing this way,” said Mark. “They’re talking about us. Can they see us?”

“No, the brambles would not let them.”

“I dare say they’re as cross as cross,” said Mark.

“They want to come. I don’t know,” said Bevis, as if considering.

“Know what?” said Mark sharply.

“That it’s altogether nice of us.”

“Rubbish—as if they would have let *us* come.”

“Still, we are not them, and we might if they would not.”

“Now, don’t you be stupid,” said Mark appealingly. “Don’t *you* go stupid.”

“No,” said Bevis, laughing; “but they must come after we have done.”

“O! yes, of course. See, they’re going to-

wards the firs: there, they're going to cross the Nile. I know, don't you see, they're going round the New Sea, like we did, to try and find us—"

"Are they?" said Bevis. "They shan't find us," resentfully. The moment he thought the rest were going to try and force themselves on his plans, his mind changed. "We won't go on the raft this afternoon."

"No," said Mark; "nor too near the edge of the island."

"We'll keep out of sight. Is there anything they could see?"

"The raft."

"Ah! No; you think, when they get opposite so as to be where they could see the raft, then Serendib is between."

"So it is. No, there's nothing they can see; only we will not go too near the shore."

"No."

"What shall we do this afternoon?" said Mark, as they went down to the hut. Pan was idly lying in the narrow shade of the fence.

"We musn't shoot," said Bevis, "and we can't go on the raft, because the savages are prowling round, and we musn't play cards, nor do some

chopping; let's go round the island and explore the interior."

"First-rate," said Mark; "just the very thing; you take your bow and arrows—you need not shoot, but just in case of savages—and I'll take my spear in case of the tiger in the reeds, or the something that comes out of the wave."

"And a hatchet," said Bevis, "to blaze our way. That would not be chopping."

"No, not proper chopping. Make Pan keep close. Perhaps we shall find some footmarks of the Something—spoor, you know."

"Come on. Down, sir." Pan accordingly walked behind.

First they went and looked at the raft, which was moored to an alder, taking care not to expose themselves on the shore, but looking at it from behind the boughs. They said they would finish fitting it up to-morrow morning, and then tried to think of a name for it. Bevis said there was no name in the *Odyssey* for Ulysses' raft, but as Calypso gave him the tools to make it, and wove the sail for him with her loom, they agreed to call the raft the Calypso. Then they tried to find a shorter way in to the knoll, which they called Kangaroo Hill, but were stopped by the impenetrable blackthorns.

As these were "wait-a-bit" thorns, Mark thought the island could not be far from Africa. Skirting the "wait-a-bits," they found some more hazel bushes, and discovered that the nuts were ripe, and stopped and filled their pockets. After all their trouble they had to go round the old way to get to Kangaroo Hill, and as they went between the trees Bevis cut off a slice of bark from every other trunk, so that in future they could walk quickly guided by the blaze, which would show too in the dusk.

From the knoll they walked across to the ivy-grown oak, and Bevis gave Mark a "bunt" up into it. Mark found a wood-pigeon's nest (empty, of course), but nothing else. The oak was large and old, not very tall, and seemed decaying; indeed, there was a hollow into which he thrust his spear, but did not rouse any creature from its lair. There was nothing in the oak. Bevis looked at the bark of the trunk, to see if any wild beast had left the marks of its claws in climbing up, just as cats do, but there was no trace.

They then went farther into the wood in the direction Pan had run away from Bevis, and found it sometimes open and sometimes much encumbered with undergrowth. Nothing appeared to them to be trampled, nor did they find any spoor. Pan

showed no excitement, simply following, from which they supposed that whatever it had been it had gone.

After awhile they found the trees thinner and the ground declined, and here in a hollow ash, short and very much decayed within, there was a hive, or rather a nest of bees. There was a shrill hum round it as the bees continually went in and out, returning in straight lines, radiating to all parts of the compass, so that they did not care to venture too near. They appeared to be the hive-bees, not wild bees, but a swarm that had wandered from the mainland.

How to take the honey was not so easily settled, till they thought of making a powder-monkey, and so smoking them out, or rather stupefying them in the same way as the hives were taken at home with the brimstone match. By damping gunpowder and forming it into a cake it would burn slowly and send up dense fumes, which would answer the same as sulphur. Then they could chop a way into the honeycomb. Seeing a tomtit on a bough watching for a chance to take a bee if one alighted before he went in, they considered it a sign they were off the mainland of Africa, as this was the honey-bird.

Several tall spruce firs grew lower down, and

under these they could see over the New Sea to the south-east towards the unknown river. Here they sat down in the shade and cracked their nuts. One or two bees came to a burdock which flowered not far from their feet, but besides the hum as they passed there was no sound, for the light south-east air, playing in the tops of the firs, was too idle to sing. Yet the motion of the air, coming off the water, was just sufficient to cool them in the shade. Far away between the trunks they could see the jungle on the mainland.

Just below, on the shore of the island, a large willow-tree had been overthrown by the tempest on the day of the battle, and lay prone in the water, but still attached to the land by its roots. The nuts were juicy and sweet, but the day was so pleasant that Bevis presently put the nuts down and extended himself on his back. High above hung the long brown cones of the fir, and the dark green of its branches seemed to deepen the blue of the sky. With half-closed eyes he gazed up into the azure, till Mark feared he would go to sleep.

“Tell me a story,” he said. “I’ll tickle you, and you tell me a story. Here’s a parrot’s feather.”

It was a wood-pigeon’s, knocked out as the bird



struck a branch in his rude haste. Mark tickled Bevis's face and neck. "Tell me a story," he said.

"My grandpa is the man for stories," said Bevis. "If you ask him to tell you the story of his walking-stick, he'll tell you all about it, and then two or three more; only you must be careful to ask him for the walking-stick one first, and then he'll give you five shillings."

"Regular make," said Mark. "He stumped into London with the stick and a bundle, didn't he, and made five millions of money?"

"Heaps more than that."

"Now tell me a story."

"Tickle me then—very nicely."

"Now go on."

## CHAPTER V.

NEW FORMOSA—THE STORY OF THE OTHER SIDE.

“ONCE upon a time,” said Bevis, closing his eyes now, “there was a great traveller who went sailing all round every sea—”

“Except the New Sea,” said Mark.

“Yes, except the New Sea which we found, and went riding over all the lands and countries, and climbing up all the mountains, and tramping through all the forests, and shooting the elephants and Indians and sticking pigs, and skinning boa-constrictors, and finding magicians—”

“What did the magicians do?”

“O! they did nothing very particular, one turned himself into a tree and was chopped up and burned in a bonfire and walked out of the smoke, and little things like that; and he went spying everywhere, and learned everything, and—”

“Go on—what next?”

“He went on till he said it was all no good, because if you went into the biggest forest that ever was you walked through it in about three years—”

“Like they did through Africa?”

“Just like it; and if you climbed up a mountain, after a day or two you got to the top; and if you sailed across the sea, if it was the greatest sea there ever was, you came to the other side in six months or so; so that it did not matter what you did, there was always an end to it.”

“Very stupid.”

“Very stupid, very; and he got tired of it always coming to the other side. He did so hate the other side, and he used to dawdle through the forests and lose his way, and he used to pull down the sails and let the ship go anyhow, and never touch the helm. But it was no use he always dawdled through the forest after awhile, and—”

“The wind always took the ship somewhere.”

“Yes, to the hateful other side, and he got so miserable and what to do he did not know, and he could not stop still very well—nobody can stop still—and that’s why people have got a way of spinning on their heels in some countries, I forget their names—”

“Dervishes?”

“Dervishes of course ; well, he became a Dervish, and used to spin round and round furiously, but you know a top always runs down, and so he got to the other side again.”

“Stupid.”

“Awful stupid. Now tell me what else he did and could not help coming to the other side?” said Bevis.

“But it’s you who are telling the story.”

“O ! but you can put some of that in.”

“Well,” said Mark, “if you walk across this island, you come to the other side, or sail down the New Sea in the *Pinta*, or if you swim out to *Serendib*, or if you climb up the fir-tree to the cones—”

“Always the other side,” continued Bevis, “and so he said that this was such a little world he hated it, you could go all round the earth and come back to yourself and meet yourself in your own house at home in no time.”

“It’s not very big, is it?” said Mark. “Nothing is very big that you could go round like that.”

“No, and the quicker you get round the smaller it is, though it’s thousands and thousands of miles, so he said ; and so he set out again to find a place where he could wander and never get to the other

side, and after he had walked across Persia and Khorasan and Beloochistan—”

“ And Afghanistan ? ”

“ Yes, and crossed the Indus and Ganges, and been over the Himalayas, and inquired at every temple and of all the wise men who live in caves and hang themselves up with hooks stuck through their backs—”

“ Fakirs.”

“ At last a very old man took pity on him, seeing how miserable he was, and whispered to him where to go, and so he went on—”

“ Where ? ”

“ To Thibet.”

“ But nobody is allowed to enter Thibet.”

“ No; but he had the pass-word, which the aged man whispered to him, and so they let him come in, and then he wandered about again for a long while, and by this time he was getting very old himself and could not walk so fast, so that it took longer and longer to get to the other side each time. Till at last, inquiring at all the temples as he went, they promised to show him a forest to which there was no other side. But he had to bathe and be purified first, and they burned incense and did a lot of magical things—”

“ In circles ? ”

“ I suppose so. And then one night in the darkness, so that he should not see which way they went, they led him along, and in the morning he was in a very narrow valley with a wall across so that you could not go any farther down the valley, nor could you climb up, because the rocks were so steep. Now, when they came to the wall he saw a little narrow bronze door in it—very low and very narrow—and the door was all covered with carvings and curious inscriptions—”

“ Magic ? ”

“ Yes, very magic. And the man who showed it to him, and who wore a crimson robe, over which his white beard flowed nearly down to the ground—I am sure that is right, flowed nearly down to the ground, that is just what my grandpa said—the old man went to the door and spoke to it in some language he did not understand and a voice answered, and then he saw the door open a little way, just a chink. Then he had to go on his hands and knees, and press his head and neck through the chink between the bronze door and the wall, and he could see over the country which has no other side to it. Though you may wander straight on for a thousand years, or ten thousand years, you can

never get to the other side, but you always go on, and go on, and go on—”

“And what was it like?”

“Well, the air was so clear that he was certain he could see over at least a hundred miles of the plain, just as you can see over twenty miles of sea from the top of a cliff. But this was not a cliff, it was a level plain, and he could see at least a hundred miles. Now, behind him he had left the sun shining brightly, and he could feel the hot sunshine on his back—”

“Just as I did on my foot while I was fishing in the shadow?”

“Very likely—he could feel the hot sunshine on his back. But inside the wall there was no sun—”

“No sun?”

“No. Ever so far away, hung up as our sun looks hung up like a lamp when you are on the hill by Jack’s house—ever so far away and not so very high up, there was an opal star. It was a very large star and so bright that you could see the beams of light shooting out from it, but so soft and gentle and pleasant that you could look straight at it without hurting your eyes, and see the flashes change exactly like an opal—a beautiful great opal

star. All the air seemed full of the soft light from the star, so that the trees and plants and the ground even seemed to float in it, just like an island seems to float in the water when it is very still, and there was no shadow—”

“No shadow?”

“No. Nothing cast any shadow, because the light came all round everything, and he put his hand out into it and it did not cast any shadow, but instead his hand looked transparent, and as if there was a light underneath it—”

“Go on.”

“And among the trees,” said Bevis, pouring out the story from his memory word for word, exactly as he had heard it, like water from a pitcher filled at the spring, “among the trees the blue sky came down and they stood in it, just close by you could not see it, but farther off it was blue like a mist in the forest, only you could see through it and it shimmered blue like the blue-bells in the copse.

“He could see thousands of flowers, but he forgot what they were like except one which was like a dome of gold and larger than any temple he had ever seen. The grass grew up round it so tall he could not see the stalk, so that it looked as if it hung from the sky, and though it was gold he could



see through it and see the blue the other side which looked purple through the gold, and the opal star was reflected on the dome. Nor could he remember all about the trees, having so much to look at, except one with a jointed stem like a bamboo which grew not far from the bronze door. This one rose up, up, till he could not strain his neck back to see to the top, and it was as large round as our round summer-house at home, but transparent, so that you could see the sap bubbling and rushing up inside in a running stream, and a sweet odour came down like rain from the boughs above.

“Now, while he was straining his neck to try and see the top of this tree, as his eyes were turned away from the opal sun, he could see the stars of heaven, and immediately heard the flute of an organ. For these stars—which were like our stars—were not scattered about, but built up in golden pipes or tubes; there were twelve tubes, all of stars, one larger than the other, and behind these other pipes, and behind these others tier on tier. Only there were twelve in front, the rest he could not count, and it was from these that the flute sound came and filled him with such transport that he quite forgot himself, and only lived in the music. At last his neck wearied of looking up, and he looked down

again, and instantly he did not hear the starry organ, but saw instead the opal sun, and the shimmering sky among the trees.

“From the bronze door there was a footpath leading out, out, winding a little, but always out and out, and so clear was the air, that though it was only a footpath, he could trace it for nearly half the hundred miles he could see. The footpath was strewn with leaves fallen from the trees, oval-pointed leaves, some were crimson, and some were gold, and some were black, and all had marks on them.

“One of these was lying close to the bronze door, and as he had put his hand through, as you know, he stretched himself and reached it, and when he held it up the light of the opal sun came through it—it was transparent—and he could see words written on it which he read, and they told him the secret of the tree from which it had fallen.

“Now, all these leaves that were strewn on the footpath each of them had a secret written on it—a magic secret about the trees, and the plants, and the birds, and the stars, and the opal sun—every one had a magic secret on it, and you might go on first picking up one and then another, till you had travelled a hundred miles, and then another hundred

miles, a thousand years, or ten thousand years, and there was always a fresh secret and a fresh leaf.

“Or you might sit down under one of the trees whose branches came to the ground like the weeping ash at home, or you might climb up into another—but no matter how, if you took hold of the leaves and turned them aside, so that thê light of the opal sun came through, you could read a magic secret on every one, and it would take you fifty years to read one tree. Some of the leaves strewed the footpath, and some lay on the grass, and some floated on the water, but they did not decay, and the one he held in his hand went throb, throb, like the pulse in your wrist.

“And from secret to secret you might wander, always a new secret, till you went beyond the horizon, and then there was another horizon, and after that another, and you could go on and on, and on, and though you could walk for ever without weariness, because the air was so pure and delicious, still you could never, never, never get to the other side.

“Some have been walking there these millions of years, and some have been sitting up in the trees, and some have been lying under the golden dome flowers all that time, and never found and never will find the other side, which is why they are so happy.

They do not sleep, because they never feel sleepy ; they just turn over from the opal sun and look up at the stars and then the music begins, and as it plays they become strong, and then they go on again gathering more of the leaves, and travelling towards the opal sun, and the nearer they get the happier they are, and yet they can never get to it.

“ While he looked he felt as if he must get through and go on too, and he struggled and struggled, but the bronze door was hard and the wall hard, so that it was no use. His mind though and soul had gone through ; and he saw a white shoulder, like alabaster, pure, white, and transparent among the grass by the golden dome flower, and a white arm stretched out towards him, so white it gleamed polished, and a white hand, soft, warm-looking, delicious, transparent white, beckoning to him. So he struggled and struggled till it seemed as if he would get through to his soul, which had gone on down the footpath, when the aged man behind dragged him back, and the bronze door shut with an awful resonance—”

“ What was that ? ”

“ Hark ! ”

“ Hark ! ”

Mark seized his spear ; Bevis his bow.

“Is it something coming from the wave?”

“No, it’s in the sky.”

“Listen!”

There was a whirr above like wheels in the air, and a creaking sound with it. They stood up, but could not see what it was, though it grew louder and came nearer with a rushing noise. Suddenly something white appeared above the trees which had concealed its approach, and a swan passed over descending. It was the noise of its wings and their creaking which sounded like wheels. The great bird descended aslant quite a quarter of a mile into the water to the south in front of them, and there floated among the glittering ripples.

“I thought it was the roc,” said Mark, sitting down again.

“Or a genie,” said Bevis. “What a creaking and whirring it made!” Rooks’ wings often creak as they go over like stiff leather, but the noise of a swan’s flight is audible a mile or more.

“Go on with the story,” said Mark.

“It’s finished.”

“But what did he do when they pulled him back? Didn’t he burst the door open?”

“He couldn’t. When he was pulled back it was night on that side of the wall, and the sudden

change made him so bewildered that they led him away as if he was walking in his sleep down to the temple."

"What did he do with the magic leaf he had in his hand?"

"O! the wind of the bronze door as it slammed up blew it out of his hand. But when he came to himself and began to reproach them for pulling him away before he had had time even to look, they told him he had been looking three days and that it was the third night when the door was shut—"

"I see—it went so quick."

"It went so quick, like when you go to sleep and wake up next minute, and it's morning. But when he came to himself he found that his right hand which he had put through and which had cast no shadow was changed, it was white and smooth and soft, while the other hand and his face (as he was so old) was wrinkled and hard, so he was quite sure that what he had seen was real and true."

"Didn't he try to go back and find the door?"

"Of course he did. But there was nothing but jungle, and he could not find the narrow valley; nor would they show him the way there again. They told him that only one was let through about every thousand years, and the reason they are so careful

people shall not enter Thibet is that they may not stumble on the bronze door.”

“And what became of him?”

“O! he lived to be the oldest man there ever was, which was because he had breathed the delicious air, and his hand was always white and soft like Frances’s. Every night when he went to sleep, he could hear some of the star flute music of the organ, and dreamed he could see it; but he could hear it plainly. At last he died and went to join his soul, which had travelled on down the footpath, you know, towards the opal sun.”

“How stupid to keep the door shut, and never let any one find it!”

“Ah, but don’t you see the reason is because if it was open and people could find it, they would all run there and squeeze through, one after the other, like sheep through a gap, till the world was left empty without anybody in it, and they told him that was the reason. Grandpa says it is a pleasant thought that at least one goes through in a thousand years; if only one, that is something. My grandpa told me the story, and the son of the man told him—I mean the man who just looked through, or else it was his grandson or his great-great-grandson, for I know it was a long time ago. And there is no other side to that place.”

“Let’s go there,” said Mark, after a pause, “you and me, and take some powder and blow the door open.”

“If we could find it.”

“O! we could find it; let’s go to Thibet.”

“So we will.”

“And blow the bronze door open.”

“And read the magic leaves.”

“And go on down the footpath.”

“And talk to the people under the golden dome flowers.”

“I’m sure *we* could find the door.”

“We *will* find it.”

“Very soon.”

“Some day.”

Watching the swan among the glittering ripples, they cracked the rest of the nuts, and did not get up to go till the sun was getting low. It was not a wild swan, but one whose feathers had not been clipped. The wind rose a little, and sighed dreamily through the tops of the tall firs as they walked under them. They returned along the shore where the weeds came to the island, and had gone some way, when Mark suddenly caught hold of Bevis and drew him behind a bush.



## CHAPTER VI.

## NEW FORMOSA—THE MATCHLOCK.

“What is it?” said Bevis.

“I saw a savage.”

“Where?”

“In the sedges on the shore there,” pointing across the weeds. “I saw his head—he had no hat on.”

“Quite sure?” Bevis looked, but could not see anything.

“Almost very nearly quite sure.”

They watched the sedges a long time, but saw nothing.

“Was it Charlie, or Val, or Cecil?”

“No, I don’t think so,” said Mark.

“They could not get round either,” said Bevis. “If they crossed the Nile like we did, they could not get round.”

“No.”

“It could not have been anybody.”

“I thought it was; but perhaps it was a crow flew up—it looked black.”

“Sure to have been a crow. The sedges do not move.”

“No, it was a mistake—they couldn’t get here.”

They went on again and found a wild bullace.

“This is the most wonderful island there ever was,” said Bevis; “there’s always something new on or about it. The swan—I shall shoot the swan. No, most likely it’s sacred, and the king of the country would have us hunted down if we killed it.”

“And tied to a stake and tortured.”

“Melted lead poured into our mouths, because we shot the sacred swan with leaden bullets.”

“Awful. No, don’t shoot it. There are currant-trees on the island too—I’ve seen them, and there’s a gooseberry bush up in the top of an old willow that I saw,” said Mark. “Of course there are bananas; are there any breadfruit-trees here?”

“Certain to be some somewhere.”

“Melons and oranges.”

“Of course, and grapes—those are grapes,” pointing to bryony-berries, “and pomegranates and olives.”

“Yams and everything.”

“Everything. I wonder if Pan will bark this time—I wonder if anything is gone,” said Bevis as they reached the stockade. Pan did not bark, and there was nothing missing.

They set to work now to make some tea and roast the moorhens, having determined to have tea and supper together. The tea was ready long before the moorhens, and by the time they had finished the moon was shining brightly, though there were some flecks of cloud. They could not of course play cards, so Bevis got out his journal; and having put down about the honey-bird, and the swan, and the discoveries they had made, went on to make a list of the trees and plants on the island, and the birds that came to it. They had seen a small flock of seven or eight missel-thrushes pass in the afternoon, and Mark said that all the birds came from the unknown river, and flew on towards the north-north-west. This was the direction of the waste, or wild pasture.

“Then there must be mainland that way,” said Bevis; “and I expect it is inhabited and ploughed, and sown with corn, for that’s what the birds like at this time of the year.”

“And the other way—where they come from—must be a pathless jungle,” said Mark. “And they

rest here a moment as they cross the ocean. It is too far for one fly."

"My journal ought to be written on palm leaves," said Bevis, "a book like this is not proper: let's get some leaves to-morrow and see if we can write on them."

"Don't shipwrecked people write on their shirts," said Mark, "and people who are put in prison?"

"So they do—of course: but our shirts are flannel, how stupid!"

"I know," said Mark, "there's the collars." He went into the hut and brought out their linen collars, which they had ceased to wear. Bevis tried to write on these, but the ink ran and sank in, and it did not do at all.

"Wrong ink," he said, "we must make some of charcoal—lampblack—and oil. You use it just like paint, and you can't blot it, you must wait till it dries on."

"No oil," said Mark. "I wanted to rub the gun with some and looked, but there is none—we forgot it."

"Yellow-hammers," said Bevis, turning to his journal again; "what are yellow-hammers?"

"Unknown birds," said Mark. "We don't know half the birds—nobody has ever put any name

to them, nobody has ever seen them : call them, let's see—gold-dust birds—”

“ And green-finches ? ”

“ Ky-wee—Ky-wee,” said Mark, imitating the green-finches' call.

“ That will do capital—Ky-wees,” said Bevis.

“ There's a horse-matcher here,” said Mark. The horse-matcher is the bold hedge-hawk or butcher bird. “ The one that sticks the humble bees on the thorns.”

“ Bee-stickers—no, bee-killers : that's down,” said Bevis. Besides which he wrote down nettle-creepers (white-throats), goldfinch, magpie, chaffinch, tree-climber, kestrel-hawk, linnets, starlings, parrots, and parrakeets. “ I shall get up early to-morrow morning,” he said. “ I'll load the matchlock to-night, I want to shoot a heron.”

He loaded the matchlock with ball, and soon afterwards they let the curtain down at the door, and went to bed, Bevis repeating “ Three o'clock, three o'clock, three o'clock,” at first aloud and then to himself, so as to set the clock of his mind to wake him at that hour. Not long after they were asleep, Pan as usual went out for his ramble.

Bevis's clock duly woke him about three, and lifting his head he could see the light through the

chinks of the curtain, but he was half inclined to go to sleep again, and stayed another quarter of an hour. Then he resolutely bent himself to conquer sleep, slipped off the bed, and put on his boots quietly, not to wake Mark. Taking the matchlock, he went out and found that it was light, the light of the moon mingling with the dawn, but it was misty. A dry vapour, which left no dew, filled the wood so that at a short distance the path seemed to go into and lose itself in the mist.

Bevis went all round the island, following the path they had made. On the Serendib side he neither saw nor heard anything, but as he came back up the other shore, a lark began to sing far away on the mainland, and afterwards he heard the querulous cry of a pewit. He walked very cautiously, for this was the most likely side to find a heron, but whether they heard his approach or saw him, for they can see almost as far as a man when standing, by lifting their long necks, he did not find any. When he reached the spot where the "blaze" began that led to Kangaroo Hill, he fancied he saw something move in the water a long way off through the mist.

He stopped behind a bush and watched, and in a minute he was sure it was something, perhaps a

duck. He set up the rest, blew the match, opened the lid of the pan, knelt down and looked along the barrel till he had got it in a line with the object. If the gun had been loaded with shot he would have fired at once, for though indistinct through the vapour he thought it was within range, but as he had ball, he wanted to see if it would come nearer, as he knew he could not depend on a bullet over thirty yards. Intent on the object, which seemed to be swimming, he began to be curious to know what it was, for it had now come a little closer, and he could see it was not a duck, for it had no neck; it was too big for a rat: it must be the creature that visited the island and took their food—the idea of shooting this animal and surprising Mark with it delighted him.

He aimed along the barrel, and got the sight exactly on the creature, then he thought he would let it get a few yards closer, then he depressed the muzzle just a trifle, remembering that it was coming towards him, and if he did not aim somewhat in front the ball would go over.

Now it was near enough he was sure—he aimed steadily, and his finger began to draw the match down when he caught sight of the creature's eye. It was Pan.

“Pan!” said Bevis. He got up, and the spaniel swam steadily towards him.

“Where have you been, sir?” he said sternly. Pan crouched at his feet, not even shaking himself first. “You rascal—where have you been?”

Bevis was inclined to thrash him, he was so angry at the mistake he had almost made, angry with the dog because he had almost shot him. But Pan crouched so close to the ground under his very feet that he did not strike him.

“It was you who frightened the herons,” he said. Pan instantly recognized the change in the tone of his voice, and sprang up, jumped round, barked, and then shook the water from his shaggy coat. It was no use evidently now to think of shooting a heron, the spaniel had alarmed them and Bevis returned to the hut. He woke Mark, and told him.

“That’s why he’s so lazy in the morning,” said Mark. “Don’t you recollect? He sleeps all the morning.”

“And won’t eat anything.”

“I believe he’s been home,” said Mark. “Very likely Polly throws the bones out still by his house.”

“That’s it: you old glutton!” said Bevis.

Pan jumped on the bed, licked Mark, then jumped on Bevis’s knees, leaving the marks of his wet paws,



to which the sand had adhered, then he barked and wagged his tail as much as to say, "Am I not clever?"

"O! yes," said Mark, "you're very knowing, but you won't do that again."

"No, that you won't, sir," said Bevis. "You'll be tied up to-night."

"Tight as tight," said Mark.

"Just think," said Bevis. "He must have swum all down the channel we came up on the catamaran. Why it's a hundred and fifty yards—"

"Or two hundred—only some of it is shallow. Perhaps he could bottom some part—"

"But not very far—and then run all the way home, and then all the way back, and then swim off again."

"A regular voyage—and every night too."

"You false old greedy Pan!"

"To leave us when we thought you were watching while we slept."

"To desert your post, you faithless sentinel."

Pan looked from one to the other, as if he understood every word; he rolled up the whites of his eyes and looked so pious, they burst into fits of laughter. Pan wagged his tail and barked doubtfully; he had a shrewd suspicion they were laughing at him, and he did not like it. In fact, it was not only the flesh-pots that had attracted Pan from his

post and led him to traverse the sea and land, and undergo such immense exertion, it was to speak to a friend of his.

They thought it of no use to go to sleep again now, so they lit the fire, and prepared the breakfast. By the time it was ready the mist had begun to clear; the sky became blue overhead, and while they were sitting at table under the awning, the first beams shot along over Serendib to their knees. Bevis said after breakfast he should practise with the matchlock, till he could hit something with the bullets. Mark wanted to explore the unknown river, and this they agreed to do, but the difficulty, as usual, was the dinner, there was nothing in their larder but bacon for rashers, and that was almost gone. Rashers become wearisome, ten times more wearisome when you have to cook them too.

Bevis said he must write his letter home—he was afraid he might have delayed too long—and take it to Loo to post that night, then he would write out a list of things, and Loo could buy them in the town, potted meats, and tongues, and soups, that would save cooking, only it was not quite proper. But Mark got over that difficulty by supposing that they fetched them from the wreck before it went to pieces.

So having had their swim, Bevis set up his target—a small piece of paper with a black spot, an inch in diameter, inked in the centre—on the teak, and fired his first shot at forty yards. The ball missed the teak-tree altogether, they heard it crash into a bramble bush some way beyond. Bevis went five yards nearer next time, and the bullet hit the tree low down, two feet beneath the bull's-eye. Then he tried at thirty yards, and as before, when he practised, the ball hit the tree five or six inches lower than the mark. He tried four times at this distance, and every time the bullet struck beneath, so that it seemed as if the gun threw the ball low.

Some guns throw shot high, and some low, and he supposed the matchlock threw low. So he aimed the fifth time above the centre, and the ball grazed the bark of the tree on the right-hand side very much as Mark's had done. Bevis stepped five yards nearer, if he could not hit it at twenty-five yards, he did not think it would be his fault. He aimed direct at the piece of paper, which was about five inches square, but the bullet struck three inches beneath, though nearly in a line, that is, a line drawn down through the middle of the paper would have passed a little to the left of the bullet-hole.

This was better, so now he tried five yards closer, as it appeared to improve at every advance, and the ball now hit the paper at its lower right-hand edge. Examining the bullet holes in the bark of the tree, and noticing they were all low and all on the right-hand side, Bevis tried to think how that could be. He was quite certain that he had aimed perfectly straight, and as he was now so accustomed to the puff from the priming, that did not disconcert him. He kept his gaze steadily along the barrel till the actual explosion occurred, and the smoke from the muzzle obscured the view. It must be something in the gun itself.

Bevis put it on the rest unloaded, aimed along, and pulled the trigger, just as he would have done had he been really about to shoot. Nothing seemed wrong. As the heavy barrel was supported by the rest, and the stock pressed firm to his shoulder, pulling the trigger did not depress the muzzle as it often does with rifles.

He aimed again, and all at once he saw that the top sight must be the cause. The twisted wire was elevated about an eighth of an inch, and when he aimed he got the tip of the sight to bear on the paper, so that, instead of his glance passing level along the barrel, it rose slightly, from the breech to the top of the sight. The barrel was more than a

yard long, so that when the top of the sight was in a line with the object, the muzzle was depressed exactly an eighth of an inch. An eighth of an inch at one yard, was a quarter at two yards, three eighths at three yards, at four half an inch, at eight it was an inch, at sixteen two inches, and at twenty-four three inches. This was very nearly enough of itself to account for the continual misses. In a gun properly made, the breech is thicker than the muzzle, and this greater thickness, like a slight elevation, corrects the sight; the gun, too, is adjusted. But the matchlock was the same thickness from end to end, and till now, had not been tried to determine the accuracy of the shooting.

Bevis got a file and filed down the sight, till it was only a sixteenth of an inch high, and then loading again, he aimed in such a way that the sight should cover the spot he wished to strike. He could see both sides of the sight, but the exact spot he wanted to hit was hidden by it. He fired, and the ball struck the paper about an inch below and two inches to the right of the centre. Next time the bullet hit very nearly on a level with the centre, but still on the right side.

This deflection he could not account for, the sight was in the proper position, and he was certain he aimed correctly. But at last he was compelled to

acknowledge that there was a deflection, and persuaded himself to allow for it. He aimed the least degree to the left of the bull's-eye—just the apparent width of the sight—and so that he could see the bull's-eye on its right, the sight well up. He covered the bull's-eye first with the sight, then slightly moved the barrel till the bull's-eye appeared on the right side, just visible. The ball struck within half an inch of the bull's-eye. Bevis was delighted.

He fired again, and the ball almost hit the very centre. Next time the bullet hit the preceding bullet, and was flattened on it. Then Mark tried, and the ball again went within a mere trifle of the bull's-eye. Bevis had found out the individual ways of his gun. He did not like allowing for the deflection, but it was of no use, it had to be done, and he soon became reconciled to the concession. The matchlock had to be coaxed like the sailing-boat and our iron-clads, like fortune and Frances.

Bevis was so delighted with the discovery, that he fired bullet after bullet, Mark trying every now and then, till the paper was riddled with bullet holes, and the teak-tree coated with lead. He thought he would try at a longer range, and so went back to thirty-five yards, but though he allowed a little more, and tried several ways, it was of no use, the

bullet could not be relied on. At twenty yards they could hit the bull's-eye, so that a sparrow, or even a wren, would not be safe; beyond that, errors crept in which Bevis could not correct.

These were probably caused by irregularities in the rough bore of the barrel, which was only an iron tube. When the powder exploded, the power of the explosion drove the ball, by sheer force, almost perfectly straight — point-blank — for twenty or twenty-five yards. Then the twist given by the inequalities of the bore, and gained by the ball by rubbing against them, began to tell; sometimes one way, sometimes another, and the ball became deflected and hardly twice the same way.

Bevis was obliged to be content with accuracy up to twenty, or at most twenty-five yards. At twenty he could hit an object the size of a sparrow; at twenty-five of a blackbird, after twenty-five he might miss his straw hat. Still it was a great triumph to have found out the secret, and to be certain of hitting even at that short range.

“Why, that's how it was with Jack's rifle!” he said. “It's only a dodge you have to find out.”

“Of course it is; if he would lend it to us, we should soon master it,” said Mark. “And now let's go to the unknown river.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## NEW FORMOSA—SWEET RIVER FALLS.

THE matchlock was slung up in the hut, and away they went to the raft; Pan did not want to come, he was tired after his journey in the night, but they made him. Knowing the position of the shoals, and where they could touch the bottom with the poles, and where not, they got along much quicker, and entered the channel in the weeds, which they had discovered beyond Pearl Island in the Pinta.

The channel was often very narrow, and turned several ways, but by degrees trended to the south-eastwards, and the farther they penetrated it, the more numerous became the banks, covered with a dense growth of sedges and flags. Some higher out of the water than others, had bushes and willows, so that, after awhile, their view of the open sea behind was cut off. They did not see any wild-fowl, for as these heard the splash of the poles, they swam



away and hid. Winding round the sedge-grown banks, they presently heard the sound of falling water.

“Niagara!” said Mark.

“No, Zambesi. There are houses by Niagara, so it’s not so good.”

“No. Look!”

The raft glided out of the channel into a small open bay, free from weeds, and with woods each side. Where it narrowed a little stream fell down in two short leaps, having worn its way through the sandstone. The water was not so much as ran over the hatch of the brook near home, but this, coming over stone or rock, instead of dropping nearly straight, leaped forward and broke into spray. The sides of the worn channel were green with moss, and beneath, but just above the surface of the water, long cool hart’s-tongue ferns grew, and were sprinkled every moment.

The boughs of beech-trees met over the fall, and shaded the water below. They poled up so near that the spray reached the raft; Mark caught hold of a drooping beech bough, and so moored their vessel. They could not see up the stream farther than a few yards, for it was then overhung with dark fir boughs. On the firs there were grey flecks of lichen.

“How sweet and clear it looks!” said Bevis.  
“Shall we call it Sweet River?”

“And Sweet River Falls?”

“Yes. It comes out of the jungle,”

Bevis looked over the edge of the raft, and saw the arch of water dive down unbroken beneath the surface of the pool, and then rise in innumerable bubbles under him. The hart's-tongue ferns vibrated, swinging slightly, as the weight of the drops on them now bore them down and now slipped off, and let them up.

By the shore of the pool the turquoise studs of forget-me-nots, with golden centres, were the brighter for the darkness of the shade. So thick were the boughs, that the sky could not be seen through them; there was a rustle above as the light south-east wind blew, but underneath the leaves did not move.

“I like this,” said Mark. He sat on the chest, or locker, holding the beech bough. “But the birds do not sing.”

The cuckoo was gone, the nightingale silent, the finches were in the stubble, there might be a chiff-chaff “chip-chipping,” perhaps deep in the jungle, one pair of doves had not quite finished nesting on New Formosa, now and then parties of greenfinches

called "ky-wee, ky-wee," and a single lark sang in the early dawn. But the jungle here was silent. There was no song but that of the waterfall.

Though there was not a breath of wind under the boughs, yet the sound of the fall now rose, and now declined, as the water ran swifter or with less speed. Sometimes it was like a tinkling; sometimes it laughed; sometimes it was like voices far away. It ran out from the woods with a message, and hastening to tell it, became confused.

Bevis sat on the raft, leaning against the willow bulwark; Pan crept to his knee.

The forget-me-nots and the hart's-tongue, the beeches and the firs, listened to the singing. Something that had gone by, and something that was to come, came out of the music and made this moment sweeter. This moment of the singing held a thousand years that had gone by, and the thousand years that are to come. For the woods and the waters are very old, that is the past; if you look up into the sky you know that a thousand years hence will be nothing to it, that is the future. But the forget-me-nots, the hart's-tongue, and the beeches, did not think of the ages gone, or the azure to come. They were there *now*, the sunshine and the wind above, the shadow and the water and the spray

beneath, that was all in all. Bevis and Mark were there now, listening to the singing, that was all in all.

Presently there was a sound—a “swish”—and looking up, they saw a pheasant with his tail behind like a comet, flying straight out to sea. This awoke them.

Bevis held out the palm of his hand, and Pan came nearer and put his chin in the hollow of it, as he had done these hundreds of times. Pan looked up, and wagged his tail, thump, thump, on the deck of the raft. If we could put the intelligence of the dog in the body of the horse, size, speed, and grace, what an animal that would be!

“Lots of perch here,” said Mark; “I shall come and fish. Suppose we land and go up the Sweet River?”

“It belongs to the king of this country, I expect,” said Bevis. “He sits on a throne of ebony with a golden footstool, and they wave fans of peacocks’ feathers, and the room is lit up by a single great diamond just in the very top of the dome of the ceiling, which flashes the sunshine through, down from outside. The swan belongs to him.”

“And he keeps the Sweet River just for himself to drink from, and executes everybody who dares drink of it,” said Mark.

Just then a bird flew noiselessly up into the beech over them, they saw it was a jay, and kept quite still. The next instant he was off, and they heard him and his friends, for a jay is never alone, screeching in the jungle. Looking back towards the quiet bay, it appeared as if it was raining fast, but without a sound, for the surface was dimpled with innumerable tiny circlets like those caused by raindrops. These were left by the midges as they danced over the water, touching it now and then.

“Did you hear that?” It was the sound of a distant gun shorn of the smartness of the report by the trees.

“The savages have matchlocks,” said Bevis. “They must be ever so much more dangerous than we thought.”

“Perhaps we’d better go,” said Mark, casting off the beech bough.

The current slowly drifted the raft out into the bay, and then they took their poles, and returned along the channel between the reeds and sedge banks. It took some time to reach New Formosa.

“I wonder if the creature out of the wave has been,” said Mark. “Suppose we go very quietly and see what it is.”

“So we will.”

Keeping Pan close at their heels, they stole along the path to the stockade, then crept up behind it to the gateway, and suddenly burst in.

“ Ah ! ”

“ Here he is. ”

“ Yow—wow ! ”

“ O ! it’s the pheasant ! ”

“ Only the pheasant ! ”

The pheasant, flying straight out to sea for the cornfields, halted on New Formosa, attracted by the glimpse he caught of the fence and hut. The enclosure seemed so much like that in which he had been bred, and in which he had enjoyed so much food, that he came down and rambled about inside, visiting even the cave, and stepping on the table.

When they came in so unexpectedly on him, he rose up rocket-like, and at first made towards the jungle, but in a minute, recovering himself, he swept round and went to the mainland by the Waste. He did not want to return to the preserves—anywhere else in preference.

While the dinner was preparing, Mark got out his fishing-rod, and fitted up the spinning tackle for pike, for he meant to angle round the island, and also some hooks for trimmers, if he could catch any bait, and hooks for night-lines, in case there

should be eels. These trimmers and nightlines put them in mind of traps for kangaroos, they had no traps, but determined to set up some wires at a good distance from the knoll, so as not, in any case, to interfere with their shooting.

After dinner, as Mark wanted to go fishing, Bevis watched for Charlie, and looking through the telescope, saw the herd of buffaloes on the green hill under the sycamore-trees. One cow held her head low, and a friend licked her poll. A flock of rooks were on the slope, and had he not known, he could have told which way the wind blew, as they all faced in one direction, and always walk to meet the breeze. When they flew up he knew Charlie was approaching. Charlie did not stay after making the signal, so Bevis went down and walked round the island till he found Mark.

As yet, Mark had had no success, but he had fixed on a spot to set the nightlines. Returning along the other shore, fishing as he went, Bevis with him, they remembered that that night the letter must be taken to Loo to post, and thought they had better have a look at the channel through the weeds, or else by moonlight they might not get to the mainland so easily.

The best tree to climb was a larch which grew

apart from the wood, and rose up to a great height, balanced each side with its long slender branches. The larch, when growing alone, is a beautiful tree. It is too often crowded into plantations which to it are like the 'Black Hole' of Calcutta to human beings. Up they went, Mark first, as quickly as sailors up the ratlins, for the branches, at regular intervals, had grown on purpose for climbing, only they had to jam their hats on, and not look higher than the bough they were on, because of the dust of the bark they shook down.

"There's the reapers," said Mark; "what a lot they have cut."

They could see the sheaves stacked, and the stubble, which was of a lighter hue than the standing wheat. Every now and then dark dots came to the golden surface of the wheat like seals to breathe. These dots were the reapers' heads.

"There's the pheasant," said Bevis, pointing to the Waste. The bird was making his way zigzag round the green ant-hills, towards the stubble. Sometimes he walked, sometimes he ran, now and then he gave a jump in his run. They lost sight of him behind a great grey boulder-stone, whose top was visible above the brambles and rush bunches which surrounded its base.



“Jack’s busy now up in the hills,” said Mark, looking the other way towards the Downs. “He might just as well let us have the rifle while he’s busy with the harvest.”

“Just as well. I say, let’s explore the Waste to-morrow. It is a wilderness—you don’t know what you may not find in a wilderness.”

“Grey stones,” said Mark. “They’re tombs—genii live in them.”

“Serpents guarding treasures, and lamps burning; they have been burning these ages and ages—”

“Awful claps of thunder underground.”

“We will go and see to-morrow—I believe there are heaps of kangaroos out there.”

“There’s the channel.”

They could trace its windings from the tree, and marked it in their minds. At that height the breeze came cool and delicious; they sat there a long while silent, soothed by the rustle and the gentle sway of the branches. They could feel the mast-like stem vibrate—it did not move sufficiently to be said to bend, or even sway—so slight was the motion the eye could not trace it. But it did move as they could feel with their hands as the wind came now with more and now with less force.

When they descended, Mark continued fishing

till they came to the raft. They embarked and poled it round the island to the other side ready to start in the evening. Then Bevis wrote the letter dating it from Jack's house up in the hills. It was very short. He said they were very well, and jolly, and should not come back for a little while yet, but would not be very long—this was in case any one should go up to see them. But when he came to read it through for mistakes, the deceit he was practising on dear mamma stood out before him like the black ink on the page.

“I don't like it,” he said. “It's not nice.”

“No; it's not nice,” said Mark, who was sitting by him. “But still—”

“But still,” repeated Bevis, and so the letter was put in an envelope and addressed. In the evening as the sun sank Mark tried for bait and succeeded in catching some, these were for the trimmers. Then they laid out the night-line for eels far down the island where the edge looked more muddy. To fill up the time till it was quite moonlight, they worked at a mast for the raft, and also cut some sedges and flags for the roof of the open shed, which was to be put up in place of the awning.

They supposed it to be about half-past nine when they pushed off on the raft, taking with them the

letter, a list of things to be got from the town to save the labour of cooking, and the flag-basket. The trimmers were dropped in as they went. Mark was going to wait by the raft till Bevis returned under the original plan, but they agreed that it would be much more pleasant to go together, the raft would be perfectly safe. They found the channel without difficulty, the raft grounded among the sedges, and they stepped out, the first time they had landed on the mainland.

As they walked they saw a fern owl floating along the hedge by the stubble. The beetles hummed by and came so heedlessly over the hedge as to become entangled in the leaves. They walked close to the hedge because they knew that the very brightest moonlight is not like the day. By moonlight an object standing apart can be seen a long distance, but anything with a background of hedge cannot be distinguished for certain across one wide field. That something is moving there may be ascertained, but its exact character cannot be determined.

As they had to travel beside the hedges and so to make frequent détours, it occupied some time to reach the cottage, which they approached over the field at the back. When they were near enough,

Bevis whistled—the same notes with which he and Mark called and signalled to each other. In an instant they saw Loo come through the window, so quickly that she must have been sleeping with her dress on; she slipped down a lean-to or little shed under it, scrambled through a gap in the thin hedge, and ran to them.

She had sat and watched and listened for that whistle night after night in vain. At last she drew her cot (in which her little brother also slept) across under the window, and left the window open. Her mind so long expecting the whistle responded in a moment to the sound when it reached her dreaming ear. She took the letter (with a penny for the stamp) and the list and basket, and promised to have the things ready for them on the following evening.

“And remember,” said Bevis, “remember you don’t say anything. There will be a shilling for you if you don’t tell—”

“I shouldn’t tell if there wurdn’t no shilling,” said Loo.

“You mind you do not say a word,” added Mark. “Nobody is to know that you have seen us.”

“Good-night,” said Bevis, and away they went. Loo watched them till they were lost against the dark background of the hedge, and then returned

to her cot, scrambling up the roof of the shed and in at the window.

They got back to the island without any difficulty, and felt quite certain that no one had seen them. Stirring up the embers of the fire, they made some tea, but only had half a cold damper to eat with it. This day they had fared worse than any day since they arrived on New Formosa. They were too tired to make a fresh damper (besides the time it would take) having got up so early that morning, and Bevis only entered two words in his journal—“Monday—Loo.”

Then they fastened Pan to the door-post, allowing him enough cord to move a few yards, but taking care to make his collar too tight for him to slip his head. Pan submitted with a mournful countenance, well he understood why he was served in this way.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## NEW FORMOSA—THE MAINLAND.

IN the morning, after the bath, Mark examined the night-line, but it was untouched; nor was there a kangaroo in the wires they had set up in their runs. Poling the raft out to the trimmers they found a jack of about two pounds on one, and the bait on another had been carried off, the third had not been visited. Bevis wanted to explore the Waste, and especially to look at the great grey boulder, and so they went on and landed among the sedges.

Making Pan keep close at their heels, they cautiously crept through the bramble thickets—Pan tried two or three times to break away, for the scent of game was strong in these thickets—and entered the wild pasture, across which they could not see. The ground undulated, and besides the large ant-hills, the scattered hawthorn bushes and the thickets round the boulders intercepted the view.

If any savages appeared they intended to stoop, and so would be invisible ; they could even creep on hands and knees half across the common without being seen. Pan was restless—not weary this morning—the scent he crossed was almost too much for his obedience.

They reached the boulder unseen—indeed there was no one to see them—pushed through the bushes, and stood by it. The ponderous stone was smooth, as if it had been ground with emery, and there were little circular basins or cups drilled in it. With a stick Bevis felt all round and came to a place where the stick could be pushed in two or three feet under the stone, between it and the grass.

“It’s hollow here,” he said ; “you try.”

“So it is,” said Mark. “This is where the treasure is.”

“And the serpent, and the magic lamp that has been burning ages and ages.”

“If we could lift the stone up.”

“There’s a spell on it ; you couldn’t lift it up, not with levers or anything.”

Pan sniffed at the narrow crevice between the edge of the boulder and the ground—concealed by the grass till Bevis found it—but showed no interest. There was no rabbit there. Such great boulders

often have crevices beneath, whether this was a natural hollow, or whether the boulder was the capstone of a dolmen was not known.

Whirr-rr!

A covey of partridges flew over only just above the stone, and within a few inches of their heads which were concealed by it. They counted fourteen—the covey went straight out across the New Sea, eastwards towards the Nile. From the boulder they wandered on among the ant-hills and tall thistles, disturbing a hare, which went off at a tremendous pace, bringing his hind legs right under his body up to his shoulder in his eagerness to take kangaroo bounds.

Presently they came to the thick hedge which divided the Waste from the cornfields. Gathering a few blackberries along this, they came to a gate, which alarmed them, thinking some one might see, but a careful reconnaissance showed that the reapers had finished and left that field. The top bar of the gate was pecked, little chips out of the wood, where the crows had been.

“It’s very nice here,” said Mark. “You can go on without coming to the Other Side so soon.”

After their life on the island, where they could never walk far without coming in sight of the water,



they appreciated the liberty of the mainland. Pan had to have several kicks and bangs with the stick, he was so tempted to rush into the hedge, but they did not want him to bark, in case any one should hear.

“Lots of kangaroos here,” said Bevis, “and big kangaroos too—hares you know ; I say, I shall come here with the matchlock some night.”

“So we will.”

There was a gap in the corner, and as they came idling along they got up into the double mound, when Bevis, who was first, suddenly dropped on his knees and seized Pan’s shaggy neck. Mark crouched instantly behind him.

“What is it ?” he whispered.

“Some one’s been here.”

“How do you know ?”

“Sniff.”

Mark sniffed. There was the strong pungent smell of crushed nettles. He understood in a moment—some one had recently gone through and trampled on them. They remained in this position for five minutes, hardly breathing, and afraid to move.

“I can’t hear any one,” whispered Mark.

“No.”

“ Must have gone on.”

Bevis crept forward, still holding Pan with one hand ; Mark followed, and they crossed the mound, when the signs of some one having recently been there became visible in the trampled nettles, and in one spot there was the imprint of a heel-plate.

“ Savages,” said Bevis. “ Ah! Look.”

Mark looked through the branches and a long way out in the stubble, moving among the shocks of wheat, he saw Bevis’s governor. They watched him silently. The governor walked straight away ; they scarcely breathed till he had disappeared in the next field. Then they drew back into the Waste, and looked at one another.

“ Very nearly done,” said Mark.

“ We won’t land again in daylight,” said Bevis.

“ No—it’s not safe ; he must have been close.”

“ He must have got up into the mound and looked through,” said Bevis. “ Perhaps while we were by the gate.”

“ Most likely. He came across the stubble, why he was that side while we were this.”

“ Awfully nearly done ; why it must have been the governor who startled the partridges !”

“ Stupes we were not to know some one was about.”

“Awful stupes.”

They walked back to the raft, keeping close to the hedge, and crept on all fours among the ant-hills so as to pass the gateway without the possibility of being seen, though they knew the governor was now too far to observe them.

The governor had been to look at the progress made by the reapers, and then strolled across the stubble, thinking to see what birds were about, as it was not such a great while till the season opened. Coming to the mound, he got up and looked through into the Waste, over which (as over the New Sea) he held manorial rights. At the moment he was looking out into the pasture they were idly approaching him along the hedge, and had he stopped there they would have come on him. As it was, he went back into the stubble, and had gone some fifty yards with his back turned when they entered the gap.

“We might have been tortured,” said Mark, as they stepped on the raft. “Tied up and gimlets bored into our heads.”

“The king of this country is an awful tyrant,” said Bevis. “Very likely he would have fixed us in a hollow tree and smeared us with honey and let the flies eat us.”

“Unless we could save his daughter, who is ill, and all the magicians can’t do her any good.”

“Now they are hoping we shall soon come with a wonderful talisman. We must study magic—we keep on putting it off; I wonder if there really is a jewel in the toad’s head.”

“You have not inked the wizard’s foot on the gateway,” said Mark.

When they got home Bevis inked it on the boards of the gate; he could not do it on the rough bark of the gate-post. They then worked at the shed, and soon put it up in place of the awning, which was taken down and carried to the raft. Next the mast was erected, and sustained with stays; it was, however, taken down again, so as to be out of the way till required, and stowed at the side by the bulwarks.

The jack was cooked for dinner, and though not enough for such hungry people it was a pleasant change from the perpetual rashers and damper. After Charley had given the signal, they parted; Mark took his perch tackle and poled the raft out near Pearl Island, where he thought he might catch some perch. Bevis loaded the matchlock with ball, and went into ambush behind the ash-tree by Kangaroo Hill, to try and shoot a kangaroo.

Mark took Pan and worked the raft along till he

was within forty or fifty yards of Pearl Island, and on the windward side. The wind had been changeable lately, showing that the weather was not so settled as it had been; it blew from the eastward that afternoon, just strong enough to cause a ripple. When he had got the raft into the position he wished, Mark put the pole down and took his rod.

The raft, as he had designed, floated slowly, and without the least disturbance of the water (such as his pole or oars would have caused) before the wind, till it grounded on a shoal ten yards from Pearl Island. Mark knew of the shoal, having noticed the place before when they were visiting the islets, and thought it would be a likely spot to find perch. The ripples breaking over the ridge of the shoal made a miniature surf there.

On the outer or windward side the perch would be on the watch for anything that might come along on the wavelets, and inside for whatever might be washed from the shoal. There were weeds at a short distance, but none just there, and such places with a clear sandy bottom are the favourite haunts of perch in waters like these. First he fished outside to windward, and his blue float went up and down on the ripples till presently down

it went at a single dive, drawn under at once by an eager fish.

In a minute he had a perch on board about half a pound weight, and shortly afterwards another, and then a third, for when perch are on the feed they take the bait directly as fast as it can be put in to them. Now Mark, though excited with his luck, was cool enough to observe one little precaution, which was to use a fresh clean worm every time, and not to drop in one that had been in the least degree mauled. This required some self-control, for several times the bait was scarcely damaged, but it was a rule that he and Bevis had found out, and they always adhered to it.

For fish have likes and antipathies exactly the same as other creatures, and if one approaches a bait and turns disdainfully away it is quite probable that three or four more may check their advance, whether from imitation, or taking the opinion of the first as a guide to themselves. So Mark always had a fresh, untainted bait for them, and in a very short time he had six perch on the raft. He put them in the locker.

There was then a pause, he had exhausted that school. Next he tried fishing out towards the nearest weeds, a small bunch at the utmost limit of

his throw, but as half an hour elapsed and he had no nibble he tried inside the shoal to leeward. In five minutes he landed a fine one, quite two pounds and a half, whose leaps went thump, thump on the deck like Pan's tail. Ten minutes more and he caught another, this time small, and that was his last. There were either no more fish, or they had no more credence.

He sat on the locker and watched his float till the sun grew low, but it was no use. He knew it was no use long before, but still he lingered. Gold-diggers linger though they know their claim is exhausted. The mind is loth to acknowledge that the game is up. Mark knew it was up; still he waited and let his float uselessly rise and fall, till he heard the report of the matchlock from the island, and then he poled homewards to see what Bevis had shot.

In ambush, under the ash-tree, and behind the fringe of fern—one frond was scorched where Mark had fired through it—Bevis watched with the gun ready on the rest. He had purposely gone a little too soon, that is, before the shadow stretched right out across the glade, because if you do not arrive till the last moment a kangaroo may be already out, and will be alarmed. Then it is necessary to wait till the others recover from their fear; for if one

runs in, the sound of his hasty passage through the tunnels in the ground conveys the information to all in the bury.

Not far from him there was a bunch of beautiful meadow geraniums; some of their blue cups had already dropped, leaving the elongated seed-vessel or crane's bill, something like the pointed caps worn by mediæval ladies. The leaves are much divided; perhaps the wind-anemone leaves (but these had withered long since) are most finely divided, and if you will hold one so that its shadow may be cast by the sun on a piece of white paper, you cannot choose but admire it. While he sat there, now and then changing the position of a limb with the utmost care and deliberation, not to rustle the grass or to attract attention by moving quickly (for kangaroos do not heed anything that moves very slowly), he saw a brown furze-chat come to a tall fern and perch sideways on the flattened yellow stalk.

Half an hour afterwards there came a sound like "top-top" from an oak on his left hand—not the ivy-grown one—and when he had by great exertion turned himself round, it is difficult to turn and still occupy the same space, he followed up all the branches of the oak cautiously till he found the bird.



If you glance, as it were, broadcast up into a tree when it is in leaf, you see nothing, though the bird's note may fall from just overhead. Bevis first looked quickly up the larger leading branches, letting his glance run up them; then he caused it to travel out along the lesser boughs of one great branch, then of another, till he had exhausted all. Still he could not find it, though he heard the "top-top." But as he had now got a map of the tree in his eye, the moment the bird moved he saw it.

It ran up a partly dead branch, then stopped and struck it with its beak, and though the bird was no larger than a sparrow the sound of these vehement blows could have been heard across the glade. He saw some white and red colour, but the glimpse he had was too short to notice much. The spotted woodpecker is so hasty that it is not often he is in sight more than half a minute. Bevis saw him fly with a flight like a finch across to the ivy-grown oak, and heard his "top-top" from thence. One of the tits has a trick of tapping branches so much in the same manner that if he is not seen the sound may be mistaken.

There was now a little rabbit out, but not worth shooting. Restless as Bevis was, yet the moment he fixed his mind to do a thing his will magnetized

the nerves and sinews. He became as still as a tree and scarcely heeded the lapse of time. Bees went by, which reminded him of the honey in the hollow ash, and he heard mice in the fern. The shadows had now deepened, and there were two thrushes and a blackbird out in the grass. Another little kangaroo appeared, and a third, and a long way off, too far to shoot, there was one about three parts grown, which he hoped would presently feed over within range.

After a while, as this did not happen, he began to think he would try and shoot two of the smaller ones at once. With shot this could have been easily done, for they were often close together. As he was watching the young rabbits, and asking himself whether the ball would strike both, a sense of something moving made him glance again up into the oak on his left hand. He did not actually see anything go up into it, but the corner of his eye—while he was consciously gazing straight forward—was aware that something had passed.

In a moment he saw it was a jay, which had come without a sound, for though the jay makes such a screech when he opens his bill, his wings are almost as noiseless as an owl's. A wood-pigeon makes a great clatter, hammering the air and the

boughs; a jay slips into the tree without a sound. The bird's back was turned, and the white bar across it showed; in a moment he moved, and the blue wing was visible.

“Frances would like it,” Bevis thought, “to put in her hat.” The ferns hid him on that side, and careless of the rabbits, he gently moved himself round; the little kangaroos lifted their heads, the larger one ran to his bury, for to bring his gun to bear on the oak Bevis was obliged to expose himself towards the knoll. Now he was round there was this difficulty, the jay was high in the oak, and the rest was too low.

To aim up into the tree he must have extended himself at full length with his chest on the ground, that would be awkward, and most likely while he was doing it he should startle the bird. He gently lifted the heavy matchlock, sliding the barrel against the bark of the ash till he had it in position, holding it there by pressing it with his left hand against the tree. This gave some support while his wrist was fresh, but in a minute he knew it would feel the weight, and perhaps tremble. It was necessary to shoot quick for this reason, and because the jay never stays long in any one tree; yet he wanted to take a steady aim. He had not shot

anything with the matchlock, though he had designed it.

Bevis brought the barrel to bear, covered the jay with the sight, then moved it the merest trifle to the left, so that he could just see the bird, and drew the match down into the priming. The bird was struck up into the air by the blow of the ball and fell dead. The wing towards him and part of the neck had been carried away by the bullet, which, coming upwards, had lifted the jay from the bough. On the side away from him the wing was uninjured; this was for Frances. There was no chance of getting a rabbit now, so he returned towards the hut, and had not been there many minutes before Mark came running.

When the jay and the perch had been talked about enough, they made some tea, and sat down to wait till it was moonlight. Bevis got out his journal and recorded these spoils, while the little bats flew to and fro inside the stockade, and even under the open shed and over the table just above their heads, having little more fear than flies.

Later on, having landed on the mainland, as they were going through the stubble to meet Loo, they saw something move, and keeping quite still by the hedge, it came towards them, when they knew it

was a fox. He came down the furrow between the lands, and several times went nosing round the shocks of wheat, for he looks on a plump mouse as others do on a kidney for breakfast. He did not seem to scent them, for when they stepped out he was startled and raced away full speed. At the whistle Loo brought the flag-basket, heavy with the tinned tongues and potted meats they had ordered. She was frequently sent into the town on errands from the house, so that there was no difficulty at the shop. Bevis inquired how all were at home; all were well, and then wished her good-night after exacting another promise of secrecy. Loo watched them out of sight.

That evening they had a splendid supper on New Formosa, and sat up playing cards.

“How ought we to know that your governor and the Jolly Old Moke are all right,” said Mark, “as we’re on an island seven thousand miles away? Of course we do know, but how *ought* we to find out? There was no telegraph when we lived.”

“Well, it’s awkward,” said Bevis—“it’s very awkward; perhaps we had a magic ring and looked through it and saw what the people were doing, or, I know! there’s the little looking-glass in the cave, don’t you remember?”

“ We brought it and forgot to hang it up.”

“ Yes ; we saw them in a magic mirror, don't you see ? ”

“ Of course—like a picture. First it comes as a mist in the mirror, as if you had breathed on it ; then you see the people moving about, and very likely somebody going to be married that you want, and then you cry out, and the mist comes again.”

“ That's right : I'll put it down in the journal. ' Made magic and saw all the blokes at home. ' ”

They fastened Pan up as before at the door-post before going to bed, and gave him several slices of rolled tongue. They slept the instant they put their heads on the hard doubled-up great-coats which formed their pillows.

## CHAPTER IX.

NEW FORMOSA—THE SOMETHING COMES AGAIN.

ABOUT the middle of the night Pan moved, sat up, gave a low growl, then rushed outside to the full length of his cord, and set up a barking.

“Pan! Pan!” said Bevis, awakened.

“What is it?” said Mark.

Hearing their voices and feeling himself supported, Pan increased his uproar. Bevis ran outside with Mark and looked round the stockade. It was still night, but night was wending to the morn. The moon was low behind the trees. The stars shone white and without scintillating. They could distinctly see every corner of the courtyard; there was nothing in it.

“It’s the something,” said Mark. Together they ran across to the gateway in the stockade, though they had no boots on. They looked outside;

there was nothing. Everything was perfectly still, as if the very trees slept.

“We left the gate open,” said Bevis.

“I don’t believe it’s ever been locked but once,” said Mark.

Neither had it. On the boards the wizard’s foot was drawn to keep out the ethereal genii, but they had neglected to padlock the door to keep out the material. They locked it now, and returned to the hut. Pan wagged his tail, but continued to give short barks as much as to say, that *he* was not satisfied, though they had seen nothing.

“What can it be?” said Mark. “If Pan used to swim off every night, he could not have had all the things.”

“No. We’ll look in the morning and see if there are any marks on the ground.”

They sat up a little while talking about it, and then reclined; in three minutes they were firm asleep again. Pan curled up, but outside the hut now; once or twice he growled inwardly.

In the morning they remembered the incident the moment they woke, and before letting Pan loose, carefully examined every foot of the ground inside the stockade. There was not the slightest spoor. Nor was there outside the gate; but it was possible



that an animal might pass there without leaving much sign in the thin grass. When Pan was let free he ran eagerly to the gate, but then stopped, looked about him, and came back seeming to take no further interest. The scent was gone.

“No cooking,” said Mark, as they sat down to breakfast. “Glad I’m not a girl to have to do that sort of thing.”

“I wish there was some wind,” said Bevis, “so that we could have a sail.”

There was a little air moving, but not sufficient to make sailing pleasant in so cumbrous a craft as the *Calypso*. They had their bath, but did not cross to *Serendib*, lest Pan should follow and disturb the water-fowl. So soon as they had dressed, the match-lock was loaded—it was Mark’s day—and they brought the raft round.

Mark sat on the deck in front with the match lit, and the barrel balanced on a fixed rest they had put up for it, not the movable staff. Bevis poled the raft across to *Serendib*, and then very quietly round the northern end of that island, where the water was deep enough to let the raft pass close to the blue gum boughs. Coming round to the other side, Mark moved his left hand, which was the

signal that they had agreed on, when Bevis kept his pole on the ground, dragging so as to almost anchor the Calypso.

In a quarter of a minute Mark fired, and Pan instantly jumped overboard. The force of his fall carried him under water, but he rose directly and brought the moorhen back to them. Bevis dragged him on board—the moorhen in his mouth—by the neck, for he could not climb over the bulwarks from the water. After the gun was loaded Bevis pushed on again slowly, but the report had frightened the others, and there were no more out feeding. They stayed therefore under the blue gum boughs and waited. Pan wanted to leap ashore and play havoc, but they would not let him, for it was impossible to shoot flying with their heavy gun.

Some time passed, and then Bevis caught sight of a neck and a head; there was nothing more visible, near the shore along which they had come. It was a dab-chick or lesser grebe. At that, the stern end of the raft, there was no rest, but Mark sat down and put the barrel on the bulwarks. Bevis whispered to him to wait till the dab-chick turned its head, for this bird, which swims almost flush with the water, goes under in an instant, having only to get his head down to disappear. He

will dive at the faintest sound or movement that he does not recognize, but soon comes up again, and will often duck at the flash of a gun too quick for the shot to strike him. Mark waited his chance and instantly fired, and Pan brought them the grebe.

They waited what seemed a very long time, but nothing appeared, so Pan was thrown ashore by his neck crash in among the "gix" and meadow-sweet. He did not care for that, he went to work in an instant. Mark got ready, for though he could not shoot flying he thought some of them would perhaps swim off. This happened, two moorhens came rushing out, one flew, the other swam as hastily as he could, and Mark shot the latter. But before he could load again Pan had disturbed the whole island, some went this way, some that, and all the fowl were scattered.

It was some time before they could get the excited spaniel on board; so soon as they could, Bevis poled the raft along to Bamboo Island, where several coots and moorhens had taken refuge. As they came near these being now on the alert began to move off. Mark aimed at one, but he was he thought not quite near enough: Bevis poled faster, when the moorhen at the splash began to rise,

scuttling and dragging the long hanging legs along the surface.

Mark drew the match down into the priming, the shot widening as it went, struck up the water like a shower round the moorhen, which though only hit by one pellet, fell and dived: Pan following. The bird came up to breathe. Pan saw her, and yelped. He touched ground and ran plunging in the water, cantering, lifting his fore-paws and beating the water, for he could not run in the same way as ashore. He caught another glimpse of the bird, dashed to the spot, and thrust his nose and head right under, but missed her. By now the raft had come up, and they beat the weeds with their poles. The moorhen doubled into the bamboos and sedges, but they were so thick they hindered her progress, and Pan snapped her up in a moment.

From Bamboo Island, Bevis poled round to five or six banks covered with sedges, and Mark had another shot, but this time, perhaps a little too confident, he missed altogether. There did not seem any probability of their shooting any more, so they returned towards New Formosa, when Mark wanted to have one more look round the lower and more level end of that island. Bevis poled that way, and Mark, seeing something black with a white bill

moving in the weeds, fired—a very long shot—and felt sure that he had wounded the bird, though for a minute it disappeared. Presently Pan brought them a young coot.

Mark had now shot three moorhens, a coot, and a dab-chick, but what pleased him most was the moorhen he had hit while flying, though but one shot had taken effect. He could not have shot so many with so cumbrous a gun had not the water-fowl been nearly all young, and had not some time gone by since the last raid had been made upon these sedgy covers; so that, as is the case on all uninhabited islands, the birds were easy to approach.

Finding that the sun-dial still only gave the time as half-past twelve, Mark wanted to try spinning again for jack if Bevis was not too tired of poling on the raft. Bevis was willing, so they started again, and he poled slowly along the edge of the broad bands of weeds, while Mark drew the bait through the water. He had one success, bringing a jack of about two pounds on deck, but no more.

Then, returning to New Formosa, they visited the wires set for kangaroos, which had been forgotten. One had been pushed down, but nothing was caught. The wires were moved and set up in other runs, with more caution not to touch the grass

or the run—the kangaroo's footpath—with the hand, and the loops were made a little larger. If the loop is too small the rabbit pushes the wire aside; so that it had better be just a little too large, that the head may be certain to go through, when the shoulders will draw the noose tight. They did not sit down to dinner till past two o'clock, having had a long morning, no part of which had been lost in cooking.

Watching for Charlie in the afternoon, they reclined on the cliff under the oak, resting, and talking but little. The light of the sun was often intercepted, not entirely shut off, but intercepted by thin white clouds slowly drifting over, which like branches held back so much of the rays that the sun could occasionally be looked at. Then he came out again and lit up the waters in gleaming splendour. There was enough ripple to prevent them from seeing any basking fish, but the shifting, uncertain air was not enough to be called a breeze.

Lying at full length inside the shadow of the oak, Bevis gazed up at the clouds, which were at an immense height, and drifted so slowly as to scarcely seem to move, only he saw that they did because he had a fixed point in the edge of the oak boughs. So thin and delicate was the texture of

the white sky-lace above him that the threads scarcely hid the blue which the eye knew was behind and above it. It was warm without the pressure of heat, soft, luxurious; the summer like them reclined, resting in the fulness of the time.

The summer rested before it went on to autumn. Already the tips of the reeds were brown, the leaves of the birch were specked, and some of the willows dropped yellow ovals on the water; the acorns were bulging in their cups, the haws showed among the hawthorn as their green turned red; there was a gloss on the blue sloes among the "wait-a-bit" blackthorns, red threads appeared in the moss of the canker-roses on the briars. A sense of rest, the rest not of weariness, but of full growth, was in the atmosphere; tree, plant, and grassy things had reached their fulness and strength.

The summer shadow lingered on the dial, the sun slowed his pace, pausing on his way, in the rich light the fruits filled. The earth had listened to the chorus of the birds, and as they ceased gave them their meed of berry, seed, and grain. There was no labour for them; their granaries were full. Ethereal gold floated about the hills, filling their hollows to the brim with haze. Like a grape the

air was ripe and luscious, and to breathe it was a drowsy joy. For Circe had smoothed her garment and slumbered, and the very sun moved slow.

They remained idle under the oak for some time after Charlie had made the usual signal; but when the shadow of the wood came out over the brambles towards the fence Mark reloaded the matchlock, and they went into ambush by Kangaroo Hill among the hazel bushes this time on the opposite side. The hazel bushes seemed quite vacant, only one bird passed while they were there, and that was a robin, come to see what they were doing and if there was anything for him. In the butchery of the Wars of the Roses, that such flowers should be stained with such memories! it is certain as the murderers watched the robin perched hard by. He listened to the voice of fair Rosamond; he was at the tryst when Amy Robsart met her lover. Nothing happens in the fields and woods without a robin.

Mark had a shot at last at a kangaroo, but though Pan raced his hardest it escaped into the bury. It was of no use to wait any longer, so they walked very slowly round the island, waiting behind every bush, and looking out over the water. There was nothing till, as they returned the other side,



they saw the parrots approach and descend into the ivy-grown oak. Bevis held Pan while Mark crept forward from tree-trunk to tree-trunk till he was near enough, when he put the heavy barrel against a tree, in the same way Bevis had done. His aim was true, and the parrot fell.

It had been agreed that Bevis should have the gun at night, for he wished to go on the mainland and see if he could shoot anything in the Waste, but still unsatisfied Mark wanted yet another shot. The thirst of the chase was on him; he could not desist. Since there was nothing else he fired at and killed a thrush they found perched on the top of the stockade. Mark put down the gun with a sigh that his shooting was over.

Bevis waited till it was full moonlight, putting down a few things in his journal, while Mark skinned three of his finest perch, which he meant to have for supper. To be obliged to cook was one thing, to cook just for the pleasure of the taste was a different thing. He skinned them because he knew the extreme difficulty of scraping the thick-set hard scales. Presently Bevis loaded the gun; he was going to do so with ball, when Mark pointed out that he could not be certain of a perfectly accurate aim by moonlight. This was true, so he

reluctantly put shot. Mark's one desire was to fetch down his game; Bevis wished to kill with the precision of a single bullet.

They poled the raft ashore, and both landed, but Mark stayed among the bramble thickets holding Pan, while Bevis went out into the Waste. He did not mean to stay in ambush long anywhere, but to try and get a shot from behind the bushes. Crouching in the brambles, Mark soon lost sight of him, so soon that he seemed to have vanished; the ant-hills, the tall thistles, and the hawthorns concealed him.

Bevis stepped noiselessly round the green ant-hills, sometimes startling a lark, till, when he looked back, he scarcely knew which way he had come. In a meadow or a cornfield the smooth surface lets the glance travel at once to the opposite hedge, and the shape of the enclosure or one at least of its boundaries is seen, so that the position is understood. But here the ant-hills and the rush-bunches, the thickets of thistles and brambles gave the ground an uneven surface, and the hawthorn-trees hid the outline.

There was no outline; it was a dim uncertain expanse with shadows, and a grey mist rising here and there, and slight rustlings as pads pressed the

sward, or wings rose from roost. Once he fancied he saw a light upon the ground not so far off; he moved that way, but the thistles or bushes hid it. A silent owl startled him as it slipped past; he stamped his foot with anger that he should have been startled. Twice he caught a glimpse of white tails, but he could not shoot running with the matchlock.

Incessantly winding round and round the ant-hills, he did not know which way he was going, except that he tried to keep the moon a little on his left hand, thinking he could shoot better with the light like that. After some time he reached a boulder, another one not so large as that they had examined together; this was about as high as his chest.

He leaned against it and looked over; there was a green waggon track the other side, which wound out from the bushes, and again disappeared among them. Though he knew that Mark could not be far, and that a whistle would bring him, he felt utterly alone. It was wilder than the island—the desolate thistles, the waste of rushes, the thorns, the untouched land which the ants possessed and not man, the cold grey boulder, the dots of mist here and there, and the pale light of the moon. Something of the mystery of the ancient days hovers

at night over these untilled places. He leaned against the stone and looked for the flicker of light which he had seen, and supposed must be a will-o'-the-wisp, but he did not see it again.

Suddenly something came round the corner of the smooth green waggon track, and he knew in an instant by the peculiar amble that it was a hare. The long barrel of the matchlock was cautiously placed on the stone, and he aimed as well as he could, for when looked at along a barrel objects have a singular way of disappearing at night. Then he paused, for the hare still came on. Hares seem to see little in front; their eyes sweep each side, but straight ahead they are blind till the air brings them the scent they dread.

All at once the hare sat up—he had sniffed Bevis, and the same minute the flash rushed from the muzzle. Bevis ran directly and found the hare struggling; almost as soon as he had lifted him up Pan was there. Then Mark came leaping from ant-hill to ant-hill, and crushing through the thistles in his haste. As Mark had come direct from the shore he knew the general direction, and they hurried back to the raft, fearing some of the savages might come to see who was shooting on the mainland. Once on the island, as the perch

were cooking, the game was spread out on the table—three moorhens, a coot, a dab-chick, a wood-pigeon, a hare, and the jack Mark had caught.

Of all the hare, or rather leveret, for it was a young one, was the finest. His black-tipped ears, his clean pads, his fur—every separate hair with three shades of colour—it was a pleasure to smooth his fur down with the hand.

“This is the jolliest day we’ve had,” said Mark. “All shooting and killing and real hunting—real island—and no work and no cooking, except just what we like. It’s splendid.”

“If only Val and Cecil could see,” said Bevis, handling the ears of his hare for the twentieth time. “Won’t they go on when we tell them?”

“Don’t talk about that,” said Mark; “don’t say anything about going home; that’s the Other Side, you know.”

“So it is. No, we won’t say anything about it. Isn’t he a beauty!”

“A real beauty,” said Mark. “Now let’s see how we can shoot a lot more to-morrow; it’s your turn; will you let me shoot once?”

“Of course; twice.”

“Hurrah! First let’s get up very early and see if a kangaroo is out; then let’s go round Serendib;

and, I say, let's go nearly up to Sweet River Falls—not quite, not near enough for the savages—and, I say! there must be heaps of things in all those sedges we tried to walk through once!”

“We could pole across to them.”

“Of course; and then get in ambush on the mainland in the evening, and shoot another parrot, and fish—no, fishing is slow, rather. Suppose we make a fish-spear and stick them! and stick it into the mud for eels. Could you think how to make a fish-spear, not my bone harpoon, an iron one—sharp?”

“I'll try.”

“O! you can do it; and let's put up some more wires, and—I do declare, I forgot to put in some more trimmers; we might put twenty trimmers and night-lines—”

“And build a hut on Serendib to wait in in winter when the ducks come—don't you remember last winter—hundreds of them?”

“First-rate! But now to-morrow. How stupid we never brought any nets!”

“Well, that was stupid,” said Bevis, still stroking his hare; he loved the creature he had slain. “I can't think how we forgot the nets.”

“There's thousands of fish; we could haul out a boatful. Let's see, isn't there anything else we

could do? Wish we had some ferrets! It's not the right time, but still it doesn't matter."

"Perhaps we could build a fence-net," said Bevis. "I forget the proper name; it's a stockade like a V, and you drive all the animals in with dogs."

"And a pit with strong spikes at the bottom in the corner. The perch are ready; move the things."

Bevis hung the hare up in the cave, but yet remained a moment to stroke the unconscious creature. The perch were very good indeed; as they were not in a hurry the fish had been cooked better. They played cards afterwards, discussing in the meantime various ways of killing the animals and birds about them.

Already in one day they had got more than enough to serve them for three or four, yet they were not satisfied. Like savages, they were hurried on by the thirst of the chase, like the thirst for wine; their tongues were parched with the dry sulphur fumes of powder; they hungered to repeat the wild excitement when the game was struck and hunted down. Had it been the buffaloes of the prairie, it would have been just the same; had it been the great elephants of inner Africa, they would have

shot them down without even a thought of the ivory.

As they were fastening up Pan at the doorway before lying down they recollected the visit of the unknown creature on the previous night, and went out and padlocked the gate. The matchlock was loaded with shot, which did not require so accurate an aim, and was therefore best for shooting in a hurry, and instead of being hung up it was leaned against the wall as more accessible, and the priming seen to. A long candle was put in the lantern on the niche and left burning, so that if awakened they could see to get the gun at once. The creature went off so quickly that not a moment must be lost in shooting if it came again, and they said to each other (to set the clock of their minds) that they would not stop to listen, but jump up the second they awoke if Pan barked. This time they thought they should be sure to see the animal at least, if not shoot it.



## CHAPTER X.

## NEW FORMOSA—THE TIGER FROM THE REEDS.

PAN did bark. It seemed to them that they had scarcely closed their eyes; in reality they had slept hours, and the candle had burned short. The clock of their minds being set, they were off the bed in an instant. Bevis, before his eyes were hardly open, was lighting the match of the gun; Mark had darted to the curtain at the door.

There was a thick mist and he could see nothing: in a second he snatched out his pocket-knife (for they slept in their clothes), and cut the cord with which Pan was fastened up just as Bevis came with the gun. Pan raced for the aperture in the fence at the corner by the cliff—he perfectly howled with frantic rage as he ran and crushed himself through. They were now under the open shed outside the hut, and heard Pan scamper without; suddenly his howl of rage stopped, there was a second of silence,

then the dog yelled with pain. The next moment he crept back through the fence and before he was through something hurled itself against the stockade behind him with such force that the fence shook.

“Shoot—shoot there,” shouted Mark, as the dog crept whining towards them. Bevis lifted the gun, but paused.

“If the thing jumps over the fence,” he said. He had but one shot, he could not load quickly: Mark understood.

“No—no, don’t shoot. Here—here’s the bow.”

Bevis took it and sent an arrow at the fence in the corner with such force that it penetrated the willow-work up to the feather. Then they both ran to the gate and looked over. All this scarcely occupied a minute.

But there was nothing to see. The thick white mist concealed everything but the edge of the brambles near the stockade, and the tops of the trees farther away.

“Nothing,” said Mark. “What was it?”

“Shall we go out?” said Bevis.

“No—not till we have seen it.”

“It would be better not—we can’t tell.”

“You can shoot as it jumps the fence,” said

Mark, "if it comes: it will stop a minute on the top."

Unless they can clear a fence, animals pause a moment on the top before they leap down. They went back to the open shed with a feeling that it would be best to be some way inside the fence, and so have a view of the creature before it sprang. Mark picked up an axe, for he had no weapon but a second arrow which he had in his hand: the axe was the most effective weapon there was after the gun. They stood under the shed, watching the top of the stockade and waiting.

Till now they had looked upon the unknown as a stealthy thief only, but when Pan recoiled they knew it must be something more.

"It might jump down from the cliff," said Bevis.

While they watched the semi-circular fence in front the creature might steal round to the cliff and leap down on the roof of the hut. Mark stepped out and looked along the verge of the sand cliff. He could see up through the runners of the brambles which hung over the edge, and there was nothing there. Looking up like this he could see the pale stars above the mist. It was not a deep mist—it was like a layer on the ground, impenetrable to the

eye longitudinally, but partially transparent vertically. Returning inside, Mark stooped and examined Pan, who had crept at their heels. There were no scratches on him.

“He’s not hurt,” said Mark. “No teeth or claws.”

“But he had a pat, didn’t he?”

“I thought so—how he yelled! But you look, there’s no blood. Perhaps the thing hit him without putting its claws out.”

“They slip out when they strike,” said Bevis, meaning that as wild beasts strike their claws involuntarily extend from the sheaths. He looked, Pan was not hurt; Mark felt his ribs too, and said that none were broken. There were no fragments of fur or hair about his mouth, no remnants of a struggle.

“I don’t believe he fought at all,” said Bevis. “He stopped—he never went near.”

“Very likely: now I remember—he stopped barking all at once; he was afraid!”

“That was it: but he yelled—”

“It must have been fright,” said Mark. “Nothing touched him: Pan, what was it?”

Pan wagged his tail once, once only: he still crouched and kept close to them. Though patted

and reassured, his spirit had been too much broken to recover rapidly. The spaniel was thoroughly cowed.

“It came very near,” said Bevis. “It hit the fence while he was getting through.”

“It must have missed him—perhaps it was a long jump. Did you hear anything rush off?”

“No.”

“No more did I.”

“Soft pads,” said Bevis, “they make no noise like hoofs.”

“No, that was it: and it’s sandy too.” Sand “gives” a little and deadens the sound of footsteps.

“Let’s go and look again.”

“So we will.”

They went to the gate—Pan, they noticed did not follow—and looked over again: this time longer and more searchingly. They could see the ground for a few yards, and then the mist obscured it like fleece among brambles.

“Pan’s afraid to come,” said Mark, as they went back to the shed.

“The fire ought to be lit,” said Bevis. “They are afraid of fire.”

“You watch,” said Mark, “and I’ll light it.”

He drew on his boots, and put on his coat—for

they ran out in waistcoat and trousers—then he held the gun, while Bevis did the same; then Bevis took it, and Mark hastily gathered some sticks together and lit them, often glancing over his shoulder at the fence behind, and with the axe always ready to his hand. When the flames began to rise they felt more at ease; they knew that wild beasts dislike fire, and somehow fire warms the spirit as well as the body. The morning was warm enough, they did not need a fire, but the sight of the twisted tongues as they curled spirally and broke away was restorative as the heat is to actual bodily chill. Bevis went near: even the spaniel felt it, he shook himself and seemed more cheerful.

“The thing was very near when we first went out,” said Bevis. “I wish we had run to the gate directly without waiting for the gun.”

“But we did not know what it was.”

“No.”

“And I cut Pan loose directly.”

“It had only to run ten yards to be out of sight in the mist.”

“And it seems so dark when you first run out.”

“It’s lighter now.”

“There’s no dew.”

“Dry mist—it’s clearing a little.”

As they stood by the fire the verge of the cliff above the roof of the hut came out clear of vapour, then they saw the trees outside the stockade rise as it were higher as the vapour shrunk through them: the stars were very faint.

“Lu—lu!” said Mark, pointing to the crevice between the fence and the cliff, and urging Pan to go out again: the spaniel went a few yards towards it, then turned and came back. He could not be induced to venture alone.

“Lions *do* get loose sometimes,” said Bevis thoughtfully. He had been running over every wild beast in his mind that could by any possibility approach them. Cases do occur every now and then of vans being overturned, and lions and tigers escaping.

“So they do, but we have not heard any roar.”

“No, and we must have come on it if it stops on the island,” said Bevis. “We have been all round so many times. Or does it go to and fro—do lions swim?”

“He would have no need to,” said Mark. “I mean not after he had swum over here, he wouldn’t go away for us—he could lie in the bushes.”

“Perhaps we have gone close by it without

knowing," said Bevis. "There's the 'wait-a-bit thorns.'"

They had never been through the thicket of blackthorn.

"Pan never barked though. He's been all round the island with us."

"Perhaps he was afraid—like he was just now."

"Ah, yes, very likely."

"And we hit him too to keep him quiet, not to startle the kangaroos."

"Or the water-fowl—so we did: we may have gone close by it without knowing."

"In the 'wait-a-bits' or the hazel."

"Or the sedges, where it's drier."

"Foxes lie in withy beds—why should not this?"

"Of course: but I say—only think, we may have gone within reach of its paw ten times."

"While we were lying down too," said Bevis, "in ambush It might have been in the ferns close behind."

"All the times we walked about and never took the gun," said Mark; "or the bow and arrow, or the axe, or anything—and just think! Why we came back from the raft without even a stick in our hands."



“Yes—it was silly: and we came quietly too, to try and see it.”

“Well, we just were stupid!” said Mark. “Only we never thought It could be anything big.”

“But It must be.”

“Of course It is: we won’t go out again without the gun, and the axe—”

“And my bow to shoot again, because you can’t load a matchlock quick.”

“That’s the worst of it: tigers get loose too sometimes, don’t they? and panthers more often, because there are more of them.”

“Yes, one is as dangerous as the other. Panthers are worse than lions.”

“More creepy.”

“Cattish. They slink on you; they don’t roar first.”

“Then perhaps it’s a panther.”

“Perhaps. This is a very likely place, if anything has got loose; there’s the jungle on the mainland, and all the other woods, and the Chase up by Jack’s.”

“Yes—plenty of cover: almost like forest.”

Besides the great wood in which they had wandered there were several others in the neighbourhood, and a Chase on the hills by Jack’s, so that in

case of a beast escaping from a caravan it would find extensive cover to hide in.

“Only think,” said Bevis, “when we bathed!”

“Ah!” Mark shuddered. While they bathed naked and unarmed, had It darted from the reeds they would have fallen instant victims, without the possibility of a struggle even.

“It *is* horrible,” said Bevis.

“There are reeds and sedges everywhere,” said Mark. “It may be anywhere.”

“It’s not safe to move.”

“Especially as Pan’s afraid and won’t warn us. If the thing had seen us bathing; It could not, or else—ah!”

“They tear so,” said Bevis. “It’s not the wound so much as the tearing.”

“Like bramble hooks,” said Mark. The curved hooks of brambles and briars inflict lacerated hurts worse than the spikes of thorns. Flesh that is torn cannot heal like that which is incised. “O! stop! panthers get in trees, don’t they? It may have been up in that oak that day!”

“In the ivy: we looked!”

“But the ivy is thick and we might not have seen! It might have jumped down on us.”

“So it might any minute in the wood.”

“Then we can't go in the wood.”

“Nor among the sedges round the shore.”

“Nor the brambles, nor fern, nor hazel.”

“Nowhere—except on the raft.

“Then we must take care how we come back.”

“How shall we sleep!”

“Ah!—think, it might have come any night!”

“We left the gate open.”

“O! how stupid we have been.”

“It could kill Pan with one stroke.”

“And Pan was not here: he used to swim off.”

“Directly he was tied up, you recollect, the very first night, he barked—no, the second.”

“It may have come *every* night before.”

“Right inside the stockade—under the awning.”

“Into the hut while we were away—the bacon was on the shelf.”

“If It could jump up like that, it could jump the fence.”

“Of course; and it shows it was a cat-like creature, because it could take one thing without disturbing another. Dogs knock things down, cats don't.”

“No, panthers are a sort of big cat.”

“That's what gnawed the jack's head.”

“And why there was no mark on the ground—

their pads are so soft, and don't cut holes like hoofs."

"The kangaroos too, you remember: very often they wouldn't come out. Something was about."

"Of course. How could we have been so stupid as not to see this before!"

"Why, we never suspected."

"But we ought to have suspected. You thought you saw something move in the sedges on Sunday."

"So I did—it was this thing: it must have been."

"Then it swims off and comes back."

"Then if we hunt all over the island and don't find It—we're no safer, because it may come off to us any time."

"Any time."

"What *shall* we do?"

"Can't go home," said Bevis.

"Can't go home," repeated Mark.

They could not desert their island: it would have been so like running away too, and they had so often talked of Africa and shooting big game. Then to run away when in its presence would have lowered them in their own estimation.

“ Can’t,” said Bevis again.

“ Can’t,” again repeated Mark. They *could* not go—they must face It, whatever it was.

“ We shall have to look before every step,” said Bevis. “ Up in the trees—through the bushes—and the reeds.”

“ We must not go in the reeds much: you can’t tell there—”

“ No, not much. We must watch at night. First one, and then the other.”

“ And keep the fire burning. There ought to be a fence along the top of the cliff.”

“ Yes—that’s very awkward: you can’t put stakes in hard sand like that.”

“ We must drive in some—and cut them sharp at the top.”

“ What a pity the stockade is not sharp at the top!—Nails, that’s it: we must drive in long nails and file the tops off!”

“ And put some stakes with nails along the cliff—the thing could not get in quite so quick.”

“ The gate is not very strong: we must barricade it.”

“ Wish we could lock the door!”

“ I should think so!”

Now they realized what is forgotten in the routine of civilized life—the security of doors and bolts. Their curtain was no defence.

“Barricade the door.”

“Yes, but not too close, else we can’t shoot—we should be trapped.”

“I see! Put the barricade round a little way in front. Why not have two fires, one each side!”

“Capital. We will fortify the place! Loop-holes. The weak spot will be the edge of the cliff up there. If we put a fire there people may see it—savages—and find us.”

“That won’t do.”

“No: we must fortify the edge somehow, stakes with nails for one thing. Perhaps a train of gun-powder!”

“Ah, yes. Lucky we’ve got plenty to eat. It won’t be nice not to have the gun loaded. I mean while loading the thing might come.”

“We’ve got plenty to eat.”

“And I wanted a lot of shooting to-day,” said Mark.

“All that’s spoiled.”

“Quite spoiled.”

Yesterday they had become intoxicated with the savage joy of killing, the savage’s cruel but wild and

abandoned and unutterable joy : they had planned slaughter for to-day. To-day they were themselves environed with deadly peril. This is the opposite side of wild life : the forest takes its revenge by filling the mind with ceaseless anxiety.

“The sun !” said Bevis with pleasure as the rays fell aslant into the open shed. The sun had been above the horizon some little while but had been concealed by the clouds and thick vapour. Now that the full bright light of day was come there seemed no need of such intense watchfulness. It was hardly likely that they would be attacked in their stockade in broad daylight ; the boldest beasts of prey would not do that unless driven very hard by hunger.

But when they began to prepare the breakfast, there was no water to fill the kettle : Mark generally went down to the shore for water every morning. Although they had no formal arrangement, in practice it had gradually come about that one did one thing and one another : Mark got the water, Bevis cut up wood for the fire. Mark had usually gone with the zinc bucket, whistling down to the strand merry enough. Now he took up the bucket, but hesitated.

“I’ll come,” said Bevis. “One can’t go alone anywhere now.”

“The other must always have the matchlock ready.”

“Always,” said Bevis, “and keep a sharp lookout all round while one does the things. Why the gun is only loaded with shot, now I remember!”

“No more it is: how lucky It did not jump over! Shot would have been of no use.”

“I’ll shoot it off,” said Bevis—“our ramrod won’t draw a charge—and load again.”

“Yes, do.”

Bevis fired the charge in the air, and they heard the pellets presently falling like hail among the trees outside. Then he loaded again with ball, blew the match, and looked to the priming; Mark took the axe in one hand and the bucket in the other, and they unlocked the gate.

“We ought to be able to lock it behind us,” he said.

“We’ll put in another staple presently,” said Bevis. “Step carefully to see if there are any marks on the ground.”

They examined the surface attentively, but could distinguish no footprints: then they went to the fence where the creature had sprung against it. The arrow projected, and near it, on close investigation, they saw that a piece of the bark of the inter-



woven willow had been torn off as if by a claw. But look as intently as they would they could not trace it further on such ground, the thin grass and sand would not take an imprint.

“ Pads,” said Bevis, “ else there would have been spoor.”

“ Tiger, or panther then : we must take care,” said Mark. “ Pan’s all right now, look.”

Pan trotted on before them along the well-known path to the shore, swinging his tail and unconcerned. As they walked they kept a watch in every direction, up in the trees, behind the bushes, where the surface was hollow, and avoided the fern. When Mark had dipped, they returned in the same manner, walking slowly and constantly on the alert.

## CHAPTER XI.

## NEW FORMOSA—THE FORTIFICATION.

ENTERING the stockade, they locked the gate behind them, a thing they had never done before in daylight, that they might not be surprised. After breakfast Bevis began to file off the heads of the nails, which was slow work, and when he had done five or six, he thought it would be handier to drive them into the posts first, and file them off afterwards, as they could both work then instead of only one. They had but one vice to hold the nail and only one could use it at a time. So the nails, the longest and largest they had, were driven into the stakes of the stockade about a foot apart—as near as the stakes stood to each other—and thus, not without much weariness of wrist, for filing is tedious, they cut off the heads and sharpened them.

Had these spikes been nearer together it would have been better, but that they could not manage;

the willow-work split if a large nail was driven into it. Next they got together materials for barricading the door of the hut, or rather the open shed in front of it. To cut these they had to go outside, and Mark watched with the matchlock while Bevis chopped.

Poles were nailed across the open sides from upright to upright, not more than six inches asunder right up to the beam on two sides. This allowed plenty of space to shoot through, but nothing of any size could spring in. On the third, the poles were nailed across up to three feet high, and the rest prepared and left ready to be lashed in position with cords the last thing at night.

When these were put up there would be a complete cage from within which they could fire or shoot arrows, and be safe from the spring of the beast. Lastly, they went up on the cliff to see what could be done there. The sand was very hard, so that to drive in stakes the whole length of the cliff edge would have taken a day, if not two days.

They decided to put up some just above the hut so as to prevent the creature leaping on to the roof, and perhaps tearing a way through it. Bevis held the matchlock this time and watched while Mark hewed out the stakes, taking the labour and the

watching in turn. With much trouble, these were driven home and sharpened nails put at the top, so that the beast approaching from behind would have to leap over these before descending the perpendicular cliff on to the hut. The fortification was now complete, and they sat down to think if there was anything else.

“One thing,” said Mark, “we will take care and fill the kettle and the bucket with water this evening before we go to sleep. Suppose the thing came and stopped just outside and wouldn’t go away?”

“Besieged us—yes, that would be awkward; we will fill all the pots and things with water, and get in plenty of wood for the fires. How uncomfortable it is without our bath!”

“I feel horrid.”

“I *must* have a bath,” said Bevis. “I *will* have a swim.”

“We can watch in turn, but if the panther sees any one stripped it’s more likely to try and seize him.”

“Yes, that’s true: I know! Suppose we go out on the raft!”

“Right away.”

“Out to Pearl Island and swim there: there are no sedges there.”

“Hurrah ! If he comes we should see him a long way first.”

“Of course, and keep the gun ready.”

“Come on.”

“First drive in the staple to lock the gate outside.”

This was done, and then they went down to the raft, moving cautiously and examining every likely place for the beast to lie in ambush before passing. The raft was poled round and out to Pearl Island, on which no sedges grew, nor were there any within seventy or eighty yards. Nothing could approach without being seen.

Yet, when they stood on the brim ready to go into the water the sense of defencelessness was almost overpowering. The gun was at hand, and the match burning, the axe could be snatched up in a moment, the bow was strung and the sharp arrows by it.

But without their clothes they felt defenceless. The human skin offers no resistance to thorn or claw or tusk. There is nothing between us and the enemy, no armour of hide, his tusk can go straight to our lives at once. Standing on the brink they felt the heat of the sun on the skin : if it could not bear even the sunbeams, how could so sensitive and delicate a covering endure the tiger's claw ?

“It won’t do,” said Mark.

“No.”

“Suppose you watch while I swim, and then you swim and I watch?”

“That will be better.”

Bevis stopped on board the raft, threw his coat loosely round his shoulders,—for the sun, if he kept still, would otherwise redden and blister, and cause the skin to peel,—and then took up the matchlock. So soon as Mark saw he had the gun ready, he ran in, for it was too shallow to plunge, and then swam round the raft keeping close to it. When he had had his bath, he threw the towel round his shoulders to protect himself from the heat as Bevis had with his coat and took the gun. Bevis had his swim, and then they dressed.

Poling the raft back to the island, they observed the same precautions in going through the trees to the hut. Once Mark fancied there was something in the fern, but Pan innocently ran there before they could call to him, and as nothing moved they went to the spot, and found that two fronds had turned yellow and looked at a distance a little like the tawny coat of an animal. Except under excitement and not in a state of terrorism they would have recognized the yellow fern in an instant; but when

intent on one subject the mind is ready to construe everything as relating to it, and disallows the plain evidence of the senses. Even "seeing" is hardly "believing."

They reached the hut without anything happening, and as they could not now wander about the island in the careless way they had hitherto done, and had nothing else to do, they cooked two of the moorhens. The gate in the stockade was locked, and the gun kept constantly at hand. A good deal of match was consumed, as it had to be always burning, else they could not shoot quickly. Soon the sense of confinement became irksome: they could not go outside without arming to the teeth, and to walk up and down so circumscribed a space was monotonous, indeed they could not do it after such freedom.

"Can't move," said Mark.

"Chained up like dogs."

"I hate it."

"Hate it! I should think so!"

"But we can't go out."

"No."

They had to endure it: they could not even go up to see the time by the dial without one accompanying the other with the gun as guard. It was late

when they had finished dinner, and went up to watch for the signal. On the cliff they felt more secure, as nothing could approach in front, and behind the slope was partly open, still one had always to keep watch even there. Mark sat facing the slope with the gun : Bevis faced the New Sea with the telescope. The sky had clouded over and there was more wind, in puffs, from the south-east. Charlie soon came, waved the handkerchief, and went away.

“I wish he was here,” said Bevis.

“So do I now,” said Mark, “and Val and Cecil—”

“And Ted.”

“Yes. But how could we know that there was a panther here?”

“But it serves us right for not asking them,” said Bevis. “It was selfish of us.”

“Suppose we go ashore and send Loo to tell Charlie and Val—”

“Last night,” said Bevis, interrupting, “why—while I was out in the wilderness and you were in the thicket the thing might have had either of us.”

“No one watching.”

“If one was attacked, no one near to help.”

“No.”



“But we could both go together, and tell Loo, and get Charlie and Val and Cecil and Ted. If we all had guns now!”

“Five or six of us!”

“Perhaps if we told the people at home, the governor would let me have one of his: then we could load and shoot quick!”

“And the Jolly Old Moke would let me have his! and if Val could get another and Ted, we could hunt the island and shoot the creature.”

Mark was as eager now for company as he had been before that no one should enjoy the island with them.

“We could bring them all off on the raft,” said Bevis. “It would carry four, I think.”

“Twice would do it then. Let’s tell them! Let’s see Loo, and send her! Wouldn’t they come as quick as lightning!”

“They would be wild to help to shoot it.”

“Just to have the chance.”

“Yes; but I say! what stupes we should be!” said Bevis.

“Why? How?”

“After we have had all the danger and trouble, to let them come in and have the shooting and the hunt and the skin.”

“Triumph and spoils!”

“Striped skin.”

“Or spotted.”

“Or tawny mane—we don’t know which. Just think, to let them have it!”

“No,” said Mark. “That we won’t: we must have it.”

“It’s *our* tiger,” said Bevis.

“All ours.”

“Every bit.”

“The claws make things, don’t they?” said Mark: he meant the reverse, that things are made of tiger’s claws as trophies.

“Yes, and the teeth.”

“And the skin—beautiful!”

“Splendid!”

“Rugs.”

“Hurrah!”

“We’ll have him!”

“Kill him!”

“Yow—wow!”

Pan caught their altered mood and leaped on them, barking joyously. They went down into the stockade and considered if there was anything they could do to add to their defences, and at the same time increase the chances of shooting the tiger.

“Perhaps he won’t spring over,” said Mark; “suppose we leave the gate open? else we shan’t get a shot at him.”

“I want a shot at him while he’s on the fence,” said Bevis, “balanced on the top, you know, like Pan sometimes at home.” In leaping a fence or gate too high for him they had often laughed at the spaniel swaying on the edge and not able to get his balance to leap down without falling headlong. “I know what we will do,” he continued, “we’ll put out some meat to tempt him.”

“Bait.”

“Hang up the other birds—and my hare—no—shall I? He’s such a beauty. Yes, I will. I’ll put the hare out too. Hares are game; he’s sure to jump over for the hare.”

“Drive in a stake half-way,” said Mark, meaning half-way between the cage and the stockade. “Let’s do it now.”

There were several pieces of poles lying about, and the stake was soon up. The birds and the hare were to be strung to it to tempt the beast to leap into the enclosure. The next point was at what part should they aim? At the head, the shoulders, or where? as the most fatal.

The head was the best, but then in the hurry and

excitement they might miss it, and he might not turn his shoulder, so they decided that whoever was on the watch at the moment should aim at the body of the creature so as to be certain to plant a bullet in it. If he was once hit, his rage and desire of revenge would prevent him from going away; he would attack the cage, and while he was venting his rage on the bars there would be time to load and fire again.

“And put the muzzle close to his head the second time,” said Mark.

“Certain to kill then.”

They sat down inside the cage and imagined the position the beast would be in when it approached them. Mark was to load the matchlock for the second shot in any case, while Bevis sent arrow after arrow into the creature. Pan was to be tied up with a short cord, else perhaps the tiger or panther would insert a paw and kill him with a single pat.

“But it’s so long to wait,” said Mark. “He won’t come till the middle of the night.”

“He’s been in the day when we were out,” said Bevis. “Suppose we go up on the cliff, leave the gate open, and if he comes shoot down at him?”

“Come on.”

They went up on the cliff, just behind the spiked stakes, taking with them the gun, the axe, and bow and arrows. If the beast entered the enclosure they could get a capital shot down at him, nor could he leap up, he would have to go some distance round to get at them, and meantime the gun could be reloaded. They waited, nothing entered the stockade but a robin.

“This is very slow,” said Mark.

“Very,” said Bevis. “What’s the use of waiting? Suppose we go and hunt him up.”

“In the wood?”

“Everywhere—sedges and fern—everywhere.”

“Hurrah!”

Up they jumped full of delight at the thought of freedom again. It was so great a relief to move about that they ignored the danger. Anything was better than being forced to stay still.

“If he’s on the island we’ll find him.”

“Leave the gate open, that we may run in quick.”

“Perhaps he’ll go in while we’re away, then we can just slip up on the cliff, and fire down—”

“Jolly!”

“Look very sharp.”

“Blow the match.”

They entered among the trees, following the path which led round the island. Bevis carried the matchlock, Mark the bow and arrows and axe, and it was arranged that the moment Bevis had fired he was to pass the gun to Mark, and take his bow. While he shot arrows, Mark was to load and shoot as quick as he could. The axe was to be thrown down on the ground, so that either could snatch it up if necessary. All they regretted was that they had not got proper hunting-knives.

First they went down to the raft moored to the alder bough as usual, then on to the projecting point where Mark once fished; on again to where the willow-tree lay overthrown in the water, and up to the firs under which they had reclined. Then they went to the shore at the uttermost southern extremity and sent Pan into the sedges. He drove out a moorhen, but they did not shoot at it now, not daring to do so lest the beast should attack them before they could load again.

Coming up the western side of the island, they once thought they saw something in the bushes, but found it to be the trunk of a fallen tree. In going inland to Kangaroo Hill they moved more slowly as the wood was thicker, and intent on the slightest indication, the sudden motion of a squirrel climbing

a beech startled them. From the top of the green knoll they looked all round, and thus examined the glade. There was not the slightest sign. The feathers of a wood-pigeon were scattered on the grass in one place, where a hawk had struck it down. This had happened since they were last at the glade. It was probably one of the pigeons that roosted in the ivy-grown oak.

Crossing to the oak, they flung sticks up into the ivy; there was no roar in response. While here they remembered the wires, and looked at them, but there was nothing caught, which they considered a proof that the rabbits were afraid to venture far from their burries while the tiger, or whatever beast it was, was prowling about at night.

Returning to the shore, they recollected a large bed of sedges and reed-grass a little way back, and going there Bevis shot an arrow into it. The arrow slipped through the reed-grass with a slight rustle till it was lost. The spaniel ran in and they heard him plunging about. There was nothing in the reed-grass.

Lastly they went to the thicket of "wait-a-bit" blackthorn. Pan did go in, and that was as much, he soon came out, he did not like the blackthorn. But by throwing stones and fragments of dead

branches up in the air so that they should descend into the midst of the thicket they satisfied themselves that there was nothing in it. It was necessary to cast the stones and sticks up into the air because they would not penetrate if thrown horizontally.

The circuit of the island was completed, and they now crept up quietly to the verge of the cliff behind the spiked stakes. The stockade was exactly as they had left it; Pan looked over the edge of the cliff into it, and did not even sniff. They went down and rested a few minutes.

There never was greater temerity than this searching the island for the tiger. Neither the bullet nor their arrows would have stayed the advance of that terrible beast for a moment. Inside their stockade and cage they might withstand him; in the open he would have swept them down just as a lady's sleeve might sweep down the chessmen on the board. Thus in his native haunts he overthrows a crowd of spear-armed savages.

“He can't be on the island,” said Mark.

“It's curious we did not see any sign,” said Bevis. “There are no marks or footprints anywhere.”

“If there was some clay now—wet clay,” said



Mark, "but it's all sandy; his claws would show in clay like Pan's."

"Like a crab." Pan's footprint in moist clay was somewhat crab-shaped.

"Is there no place where he would leave a mark?"

"Just at the edge of the water the moorhens leave footprints."

"That would be the place, only we can't look very close to the edge everywhere."

"There's the raft; we could on the raft."

"Shall we go on the raft?"

"Suppose we go all round the island?" said Bevis, "on the raft."

"We never have been," said Mark. "Not close to the shore."

"No; let us pole round close to the shore—all round, and see if we can find any spoor in the shallows."

They went to the raft and embarked. As they started a crimson glow shot along under the clouds, the sun was sinking and the sky beamed. The wind had risen and the wavelets came splash, splash against the edge of the raft. Some of the yellow leaves of the willows floated along and fell on the deck. They poled slowly and constantly grounded

or struck the shore, so that it occupied some time to get round, especially as at the southern extremity it was so shallow they were obliged to go a long way out.

In about an hour they reached the thick bed of reed-grass into which Bevis had shot his arrow, and as the raft slowly glided by Mark suddenly exclaimed, "There it is!"

There it was—a path through the reed-grass down to the water's edge—the trail of some creature. Bevis stuck his pole into the ground to check the onward movement of the raft. The impetus of the heavy vessel was so great though moving slowly that it required all his strength to stay it. Mark came with his pole, and together they pushed the raft back, and it ran right up into the reed-grass and grounded. Pan instantly leapt off into the path, and ran along it wagging his tail; he had the scent, though it seemed faint as he did not give tongue. They stood at the bulwark of the raft and looked at the trail.

## CHAPTER XII.

## NEW FORMOSA—THE TRAIL.

AT the water's edge some flags were bent, and then the tall grass, as high as their chests, was thrust aside, forming a path which had evidently been frequently trodden. There was now no longer the least doubt that the creature, whatever it was, was of large size, and as the trail was so distinct the thought occurred to them both at once that perhaps it had been used by more than one. From the raft they could see along it five or six yards, then it turned to avoid an alder. While they stood looking Pan came back, he had run right through and returned, so that there was nothing in the reed-bed at present.

Bevis stepped over the bulwark into the trail with the matchlock; Mark picked up the axe and followed. As they walked their elbows touched the grass each side, which showed that the creature was rather

high than broad, lean like the whole feline tribe, long, lean, and stealthy. The reed-grass had flowered and would soon begin to stiffen and rustle dry under the winds. By the alder a bryony vine that had grown there was broken and had withered, it had been snapped long since by the creature pushing through.

The trail turned to the right, then to the left round a willow stole, and just there Pan, who trotted before Bevis, picked up a bone. He had picked it up before and dropped it; he took it again from habit, though he knew it was sapless and of no use to him. Bevis took it from his mouth, and they knew it at once as a duck's drumstick. It was polished and smooth, as if the creature had licked it, or what was more probable carried it some distance, and then left it as useless. They had no doubt it was a drumstick of the wild duck Mark shot.

The trail went straight through sedges next, these were trampled flat; then as the sedges grew wider apart they gradually lost it in the thin, short grass. This was why they had not seen it from the land, there the path began by degrees; at the water's edge, where the grasses were thick and high, it was seen at once. Try how they would, they

could not follow the trail inland, they thought they knew how to read "sign," but found themselves at fault. On the dry, hard ground the creature's pads left no trail that they could trace. Mark cut off a stick with the axe and stuck it up in the ground so that they could find the spot where the path faded when walking on shore, and they then returned to the raft. On the way they caught sight of Bevis's arrow sticking in the trunk of the alder, and withdrew it.

At the water's edge they looked to see if there was any spoor. In passing through the reed-grass the creature had trampled it down, and so walked on a carpet of vegetation which prevented any foot-prints being left on the ground though it was moist there. At the water's edge perhaps they might have found some, but in pushing the raft up the beams had rubbed over the mud and obliterated everything. When they got on the raft they looked over the other bulwark, and a few yards from the shore noticed that the surface of the weeds growing there appeared disturbed.

The raft was moved out, and they found that the weeds had been trampled; the water was very shallow, so that the creature in approaching the shore had probably plunged up and down as the

spaniel did in shallow water. Like the reed-grass the trampled weeds had prevented any footprints in the ooze. They traced the course the creature had come out for fully thirty yards, and the track pointed straight to the shore of the mainland so that it seemed as if it started at no great distance from where they used to land.

But when they had thrust the raft as far as this, not without great difficulty, for it dragged heavily on the weeds and sometimes on the ground, the marks changed and trended southwards. The water was a little deeper and the signs became less and less obvious, but still there they were, and they now pointed directly south. They lost them at the edge of the weeds, the water was still shallow, but the character of the bottom had changed from ooze to hard rock-like sand. Here they met the waves driven before the southerly wind, and coming from that part of the New Sea they had not yet explored. The wind was strong enough to make it hard work to pole the raft against it, and the spray dashed against the willow bulwark.

These waves prevented them from clearly distinguishing the bottom, though the water was very shallow, but then they thought if it had been calm the creature's pads would have left no marks

on such hard sand. It was now more than an hour after sunset, and the louring clouds rendered it more dusky than usual so soon. The creature had evidently come from the jungle southwards, but it was not possible to go there that night in the face of the rising gale. The search must be suspended till morning.

Letting the raft drive before the wind, and assisting its progress by poling, they managed to get it by sheer force through the weeds into the clear deep water by the cliff, there they paddled it round, but unable to touch bottom, the waves drifted them over to Serendib. With continual labour they poled it along the shore of Serendib, nearly to the end of the island, and then half-way across, and paddling hard with the poles contrived to get over aslant. By the time they had moored it, it was quite dusk, and they were tired with the exertion of forcing the unwieldy craft in the face of the gale.

Hastening home they found the stockade just as it had been left, and lost not a moment in lighting the fires, one on each side of the hut, the wood for which had already been collected. The gate was padlocked, the kettle put on, and they sat down to rest. A good supper and strong tea restored their strength. They sat inside the cage at the

table, and needed no lantern, for the light of the two fires lit up the interior of the stockade.

As it became later the hare and the birds were fastened to the stake for a bait, more wood was heaped on the fires, and last of all the remaining poles were lashed to the uprights of the shed, forming a complete cage with horizontal bars. The matchlock was placed handy, the bow and arrows laid ready, and both axes, so that if the beast inserted his paw they could strike it.

Cards were then drawn to see who should go to sleep first, and as Bevis cut highest, he went into the hut to lie down. But after he had been there about a quarter of an hour he jumped up, quite unable to go to sleep. Mark said he did not feel the least sleepy either, so they agreed that both should sit up. Till now they had been in the outer shed or cage, but Mark thought that perhaps the creature would not come if it saw them, so they went inside the hut, and made Pan come too. The curtain was partly let down and looped aside, so that they had a view of the stockade, and the lantern lit and set in the niche.

They could hear the wind rushing over the trees outside, and every now and then a puff entered and made the lantern flicker. The fires still burned



brightly, and as nothing came the time passed slowly. Bevis did not care to write up his journal, so at last they fell back on their cards and played bezique on the bed. After a time this too wearied. The tea and supper had refreshed them; but both had worked very hard that day—a long day too, as they had been up so early—and their interest began to flag. The cards were put down and they stood up to recover their wakefulness, and then went out into the cage.

The fires still flickered, though the piles of wood were burnt through, and the sticks had fallen off, half one side half the other. The wind had risen and howled along, carrying with it a few leaves which blew against the bars. It was perfectly dark, for the thick clouds hid the moon, and drops of rain were borne on the gale. They would have liked to replenish the fires, but could not get out without unlashng several of the bars, and as Mark said the creature would be more likely to come as the fires burned low. Weary and yawning they went back into the hut and sat down once more.

“One thing,” said Mark, “suppose he were to stay just outside the stockade—I mean if he comes and we shoot and hit him till he is savage, and don’t kill him, well then if he can’t get in to us, don’t you

see, when it is day he'll go outside the stockade and lie down."

"So that we can't go out."

"And there he'll stay, and wait, and wait."

"And stay till we are starved."

"We could not shoot him through the stockade."

"No. Or he could go up on the cliff and watch there and never let us out. Our provisions would not last for ever."

"The water would go first."

"Suppose he does that, what shall we do then?" said Mark.

"I don't know," said Bevis languidly.

"But, now you think."

"Bore a tunnel through the cliff to the sea," said Bevis, yawning. "I am so sleepy, and one get out and swim round and fetch the raft."

"Tunnel from the cave right through?"

"Straight right through."

"We shall beat him any way," said Mark.

"Of course we shall. Wish he'd come! O!"— yawning—"Let us go to sleep; Pan will bark."

"Not both," said Mark.

"Both."

"No."

Mark would not agree to this. In the end they

cut cards again and Mark won. He stretched himself out on the bed and asked Bevis what he was going to do. Bevis took one of the great-coats (his pillow), placed it on the floor by the other wall of the hut, sat down and leaned back against the wall. In this position, with the curtain looped up, he could see straight out across to the gateway of the stockade, which was visible whenever the embers of the fires sent up a flash of light. Pan was close by curled up comfortably. He put the matchlock by his side so that he could snatch it up in a moment. "Good-night," he said; Mark was already firm asleep.

Bevis put out his hand and stroked Pan; the spaniel recognized the touch in his sleep, and never moved. Now that it was so still, and there was no talking, Bevis could hear the sound of the wind much plainer, and once the cry of a heron rising harsh above the roar. Sometimes the interior of the stockade seemed calm, the wind blew over from the tops of the trees to the top of the cliff, and left the hollow below in perfect stillness. Suddenly, like a genie, the wind descended, and the flames leapt up on each side from the embers. In a moment the flames fell and the enclosure without was in darkness.

All was still again except the distant roar in the wood. A fly kept awake by the lantern crawled along under the roof, became entangled in a spider's web and buzzed. The buzz seemed quite loud in the silent hut. Pan sighed in his slumber. Bevis stretched his legs and fell asleep, but a gnat alighted on his face and tickled him. He awoke, shook himself, and reproached himself for neglecting his duty. The match of the matchlock had now burned almost away; he drew the last two inches up farther in the spiral of the hammer, and thought that he would get up in a minute and put some more match in. Ten seconds later and he was asleep; this time firmly.

The last two inches of the match smouldered away, leaving the gun useless till another was lit and inserted. Down came the genie of the wind, whirling up the grey ashes of the fires and waking a feebler response. The candle in the lantern guttered and went out. As the dawn drew on above them the clouds became visible, and they were now travelling from the north-north-west, the wind having veered during the night.

A grey light came into the hut. The strong gusts of the gale ceased, and instead a light steady breeze blew. The clouds broke and the sky showed.

A crow came and perched on the stockade, then flew down and picked up several fragments; it was the crow that had pecked the jack's head. He meditated an attack on the hare and the birds strung to the stake, when Pan woke, yawned and stretched himself. Instantly the crow flew off.

Sunbeams fell aslant through the horizontal bars on to the table. Pan got up and went as far as the short cord allowed him; there was a crust under the table; he had disdained it last night at supper, when there was meat to be had, now he ate it. He gave a kind of yawning whine, as much as to say, "Do wake up;" but they were sleeping far too sound to hear him.

Mark woke first, and sat up. Bevis had slept a long time with his back to the wall, but had afterwards gently sunk down, and was now lying with his head on the bare ground of the floor. Mark laughed, Pan wagged his tail and looked at Bevis as if he understood it. Mark touched Bevis, and he instantly sat up, and felt for the gun as if it was dark.

"Why!"

"It's morning."

"He hasn't been?"

"No."

They unlashed the bars, let Pan loose, and went out into the courtyard. It was a beautiful fresh morning. There were no signs whatever of the creature having visited the place, neither outside nor in. They were much disappointed that it had not come, but supposed the wind and the roughness of the waves had deterred it from venturing across.

After breakfast, on looking at the sun-dial, they were surprised to find it ten o'clock. Then taking the matchlock, bow, and axe, as before, they started for the bed of reed-grass, thinking that the creature might possibly have come to the island without approaching the stockade. The danger had now grown familiar, and they did not care in the least; they walked straight to the place without delay or reconnoitring. The trail had not apparently been used during the night, a small branch of ash had been snapped off and blown on to it, and the waves and wind had smoothed away the disturbed appearance of the weeds.

As the wind was favourable and not rough, they at once resolved to sail to the south and examine the shore there, and if they could hit upon the trail to follow it up. But first they must have their bath at Pearl Island. They returned to the hut, put the

hare and birds that had been hung on the stake inside the hut, and lashed up the bars, determined that the creature at all events should not have the game in their absence.

Then locking the gate of the stockade, they went to the raft, and bathed at Pearl Island. The mast was then stepped, the stays fastened, and the sail set. Bevis took the rudder and put it in the water over the starboard quarter, it was like a long, broad oar, the sail filled, and the heavy craft began to drive before the wind. Mark knelt in front to keep a sharp look-out for the shoals which they knew existed. As the *Calypso* drew so little water they passed over several without touching, where the *Pinta*, deep with ballast, had struck, and were soon past the farthest point they had reached in the boat.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## NEW FORMOSA—VOYAGE IN THE CALYPSO.

SURGING along the Calypso sought the south, travelling but little faster than the waves, but smoothing a broad wake as she drove over them. Bevis held the oar-rudder under his right arm, with his hand on the handle, and felt the vibration of the million bubbles rising from the edge of the rudder to the surface. Piloting the vessel Mark sometimes directed him to steer to the right, and sometimes to the left.

There were four herons standing in a row on one sand-bank, they rose and made off at their approach; Bevis said he must have a heron's plume. They could just see the swan a long, long way behind in the broad open water off Fir-Tree Gulf. Not long after passing the heron's sand-bank, Mark said he was sure the water was deeper, as there were fewer weeds, but there was a long island in front of them



which would soon bar their progress. It stretched from one mass of impenetrable weeds to another, and they began to think of lowering sail, when suddenly the raft stopped with a jerk, then swung round, and hung suspended.

“A snag,” said Bevis, recovering himself.

Mark had been pitched forward, and had it not been for the willow-plaited bulwark would have gone overboard. They had the sail down in a moment, fearing that the mast would snap. As they moved on the deck the raft swung now this way now that like a platform on a pivot.

“If it had been the *Pinta*,” said Mark, “there would have been a hole knocked in the bottom.”

The thin planking of the boat would have been crushed like an egg-shell; the thick beams at the bottom of the *Calypso* could not be damaged. The only difficulty was to get her off. They tried standing at one edge, and then the other, depressing it where they stood and lightening it at the other part, and at last by moving everything heavy on deck to one corner, she floated and bumped off. Looking over the bulwark they saw the snag, it was the top of a dead and submerged willow. Had they had a large sail, or had the wind been rough the mast would have snapped to a certainty; but the wind

had been gradually sinking for some hours. They did not hoist sail again, being so near the long and willow-grown island, but let the raft drift to the shore.

The willows were so thick that it did not appear any use to carry the matchlock with them as the long barrel would constantly catch in the boughs. Bevis took his bow and arrows, Mark his axe, and they climbed ashore through the blue gums, compelling Pan by threats to keep close behind. The island they soon found was nothing but a narrow bank, and beyond it the water recommenced, but even could they have dragged the raft over and launched it afresh the part beyond would not have been navigable. It was plated with pond-weed, the brown leaves overlapping each other like scale-armour on the surface.

There seemed indeed more weed than water, great water-docks at the margin with leaves almost a yard long, branched water plantains with palm-like leaves and pale pink flowers; flags already a little brown, then sedges and huge tussocks; these last—small islets of tall grass—were close together in the shallow water like the ant-hills in the Waste. No course could be forced through or twisted in and out such a mass, and beyond it were beds of reed-grass, out of which rose the reddish and scaling poles of

willow. At the distant margin they could see the tops of the trees of the jungle on the mainland. Where the water was visible it had a red tinge and did not look good to drink, very different from that at New Formosa. This was stagnant.

The current, slight as it was, from Sweet River Falls, passed between New Formosa and Serendib, hence the deep channel, and rendered the water there always fresh and pure. Over the pond-weed blue dragon-flies were hovering, and among the willows tits called to each other.

“It’s South America,” said Mark. “It’s a swamp by the Amazon.”

“I suppose it is,” said Bevis. “We can’t go any farther.”

Without wading-boots it was impossible to penetrate the swamp, and even then they could not have gone among the black-jointed horse-tails, the stems of which were turning yellowish, for they would have sunk in ooze to the waist. It would have been the very haunt of the bearded-tit had not that curiously marked bird been extinct on the shores of the New Sea. They had never even heard of the bearded-tit, so completely had it died out there.

They moved a few yards along the bank, but found it was a ceaseless climb from stole to stole, and so

went back to the raft, and poled close to the shore looking for traces of the creature. They poled from one end to the other, up to the banks of weeds and flags, but without seeing any sign. So far as they could tell the creature had not started from this place, but it might have swum out from any other part of the shore.

“He’s not here,” said Bevis. “We shall never hunt him out of all these sedges; I think we had better set a trap for him.”

“In the reeds at home”—New Formosa was home now.

“In his trail.”

“Dig a pit,” said Mark. “They dig pits for lions.”

“Or set up a big beam to fall and crush him when he pushes a twig.”

“Or a spring gun; would the matchlock do?”

“Only then we want another gun when we go to find him. He might sham dead.”

“Wires are not strong enough.”

“No; the pit’s best,” said Bevis. “Yes; we’ll dig a pit and stick up a sharp spike in it, and put a trap-door at the top—just a slight frame, you know, to give way with his weight—”

“And strew it over with grass.”

“ And put the hare to tempt him.”

“ And shoot him in the pit ! ”

“ Won't he glare ! ”

“ Roar ! ”

“ Gnash his grinders ! ”

“ Won't his teeth gleam ! ”

“ Red tongue and foam ! ”

“ Hot breath—in such a rage ! ”

“ Lash his tail ! ”

“ Tear the sides of the pit ! ”

“ Don't let's kill him quick. Let's make a spear and stick him a little ! ”

“ Come on.”

They seized the poles, all eagerness to return and dig the pit.

“ Stupes we were not to do it before.”

“ Awful stupes ”

“ We never think of things till so long.”

Such has been the case with the world since history began. How many thousands of years was it after primeval man first boiled water to the steam-engine ? How long from the first rubbing of electron or amber, and a leaping up of little particles to it, to the electric tramway ?

They had sailed to the swamp quickly, but it occupied more than an hour to pole back to New

Formosa, so that it was the afternoon when they moored the *Calypso* in the usual place. They were hungry and hastened to the hut, intending to begin the pit directly after dinner, when as they came near, Pan ran on first and barked by the gate.

“ Ah ! ”

“ He’s been ! ”

They ran, forgetting even to look at the match of the gun. There was nothing in the enclosure ; but Pan sniffed outside, and gave two short “ yaps ” as much as to say, “ I know.”

“ Reeds,” said Bevis. “ He’s in the reeds.”

“ He heard us coming and slipped off—he’s hiding.”

“ We shall have him ! Now ! ”

“ Now directly ! ”

“ This minute ! ”

With incredible temerity they ran as fast as they could go to the bed of reed-grass in which they had discovered the trail. Pan barked at the edge ; Bevis blew the match.

“ Lu—lu—lu ! go in ! ”

“ Fetch him out.”

“ Hess—ess—go in ! ”

“ Now ! Have him ! ”

Pan stopped at the edge and yapped in the air, wagging his tail and hesitating.

“He’s there!” said Bevis.

“As sure as sure,” said Mark. Their faces were lit up with the wild joy of the combat; as if like hounds they could scent the quarry.

“Go in,” shouted Bevis to the spaniel angrily. Pan crouched, but would not go. Mark kicked him, but he would not move.

“Hold it,” said Bevis, handing the matchlock to Mark. He seized the spaniel by his shaggy neck, lifted and hurled him by main force a few yards crash among the sedges. Pan came out in an instant.

“Go in, I tell you!” shouted Bevis, beside himself with anger; the spaniel shivered at his feet. Again Bevis lifted him, swung him, and hurled him as far this time as the reed-grass. The next instant Pan was at his feet again. Encouragement, persuasion, threats, blows, all failed; it was like trying to make him climb a tree. The dog could not force his nature. Mark threw dead sticks into the reed-grass; Bevis flung some stones.

“You hateful wretch!” Bevis stamped his foot. “Get away.” Pan ran back. “Give me the gun—I’ll go in.”

If the dog would not, he would hunt the creature from its lair himself.

“O! stop!” said Mark, catching hold of his arm, “don’t—don’t go in—you don’t know!”

“Let me go.”

“I won’t.”

“I will go.”

They struggled with each other.

“Shoot first,” said Mark, finding he could not hold him. “Shoot an arrow—two arrows. Here—here’s the bow.”

Bevis seized the bow and fitted the arrow.

“Shoot where the path is,” said Mark. “There—it’s there”—pointing. Bevis raised the bow. “Now shoot!”

“O!” cried a voice in the reeds, “don’t shoot!”

Bevis instantly lowered the bow.

“What?” he said.

“Who’s there?” said Mark.

“It’s me—don’t shoot me!”

“Who are you?”

“Me.”

They rushed in and found Loo crouching behind the alder in the reed-grass; in her hand was a thick stick which she dropped.

“How dare you!” said Bevis.



“How did you get here?” said Mark.

“Don’t you be angry!” said Loo.

“But how dare you!”

“On our island!”

“Don’t you—don’t you!” repeated Loo.

“You!”

“You!” One word but such intense wrath.

“O!” cried Loo, beginning to sob.

“You!”

“You!”

“O! Don’t! He were so hungry.” Sob,  
sob.

“Pooh!”

“Yah!”

“Yow—wow!” barked Pan.

“He—he,” sobbed Loo. “He—he—”

“He—what?”

“He were so hungry.” Sob, sob.

“Who?”

“Samson.”

“Who’s Samson?”

“My—y—lit—tle—brother.”

“Then you took our things?” said Mark.

“He—he—kept on crying.”

“You had the damper—”

“And the potatoes—”

“ And the bacon—”

“ You didn’t—didn’t care for it,” sobbed Loo.

“ Did you take the rabbit-skin ? ” said Mark.

“ Yes—es.”

“ But Samson didn’t eat that ; did he ? ”

“ I—I—sold it.”

“ What for ? ”

“ Ha’-penny of jumbles for Samson.” Jumbles are sweets.

“ How did you get here ? ”

“ I come.”

“ How ? ”

“ I come.”

“ It’s disgusting,” said Bevis, turning to Mark ;  
“ spoiling our island.”

“ Not a tiger,” said Mark. “ Only a girl.”

“ It’s not proper,” said Bevis in a towering rage.

“ Tigers are proper, girls are not proper.”

“ No ; that they’re not.”

“ Girls are—Foo !—”

“ Very—foo ! ” Contemptuous puffing.

“ It’s not the stealing.”

“ No ; it’s the coming—”

“ Where you’re not wanted—”

“ Horrible ! ”

“ Hateful ! ”

“ What shall we do ? ”

“ Can’t kill her.”

“ Nor torture her.”

“ Nor scalp her.”

“ Thing ! ”

“ Creature ! ”

“ Yow—wow ! ”

“ Tie her up.”

“ If we were savages we’d cook you ! ”

“ Limb at a time.”

“ What *can* we do with her ? ”

“ Let me stop,” said Loo pleadingly.

“ Let *you* stop ! You ! ”

“ I can cook and make tea and wash things.”

“ Stop a minute,” said Mark. “ Perhaps she’s a native.”

“ Ah ! ” This was more proper. “ She looks brown.”

“ Copper-coloured.”

“ Are you a savage ? ”

“ If you says so,” said Loo penitently.

“ Are you very sorry ? ”

“ You’re sure you’re a savage ? ”

“ Will she do ? ”

“ You’re our slave.”

“ Ar-right ” [all-right], said Loo her brown eyes beginning to sparkle through her tears. “ I’ll be what you wants.”

“Mind you’re a slave.”

“So I be.”

“You’ll be thrashed.”

“Don’t care. Let I bide here.”

“I suppose we must have her.”

“You’re a great nuisance.”

“Ar-right.”

“Slave! Carry that.” Mark gave her the axe.

“And that.” Bevis gave her the bow. Loo took them proudly.

“You’re to keep behind—Pan’s to go before you.”

“Dogs first, slaves next.”

“Make her fetch the water.”

“Chop the wood.”

“Turn the spit.”

“Capital; we wanted a slave!”

“Just the thing.”

“Hurrah!”

“But it’s not so nice as a tiger.”

“O! No!”

“Nothing like.”

They marched out of the reed-grass, Pan and the slave behind.

“But how did you get here?” said Bevis, stopping suddenly.

“ I come, I told you.”

“ Can you swim ? ”

“ No.”

“ There’s no boat.”

“ Did you have a catamaran ? ”

“ What be that ? ”

“ Why don’t you tell us how you got here ? ”

“ I come—a-foot.”

“ Waded ? You couldn’t.”

“ I walked drough’t ”—i.e. through it.

They would not believe her at first, but she adhered to her story, and offered to wade back to the mainland to prove that it was possible. She pointed out to them the way she had come by the shoals and sedge-grown banks ; the course she had taken curved like half a horse-shoe. First it went straight a little way, then the route or ford led to the south and gradually turned back to the west, reaching the mainland within sixty or seventy yards of the place where they always disembarked from the raft. It took some time for Loo to explain how she had done it, and how she came to know of it, but it was like this.

Once now and then in dry seasons the waters receded very much, and they were further lowered by the drawing of hatches that the cattle might

get water to drink low down the valley, miles away. As the waters of the New Sea receded the shallower upper, or southern end, became partly dry. Then a broad low bank of sand appeared stretching out in the shape of half a horse-shoe the extremity of which being much higher was never submerged, but formed the island of New Formosa. At such times any one could walk from the mainland out to New Formosa dryshod for weeks together.

This was how the island became stocked with squirrels and kangaroos ; and it was the existence of the rabbits in the burries at the knoll that had originally led to Loo's knowledge of the place. Her father went there once when the water was low to ferret them, and she was sent with his luncheon to and fro. That was some time since, but she had never forgotten, and often playing about the shore, had no difficulty in finding the shoal. The route or ford was, moreover, marked to any one who knew of its existence by the tops of sand-banks, and sedge-grown islets, which were in fact nothing but high parts of the same long, curved bank.

There was not more than a foot deep of water anywhere the whole distance, and often not six inches. This was in August, in winter there would be much

more. Tucking up her dress she had waded through easily, feeling the bottom with a thick stick to guide her steps. The worst place was close to the island, by the reed-grass, where she sunk a little in the ooze, but it was only for a few yards.

At the hut the weapons were laid aside, and the slave put out the dinner for them. Bevis and Mark sat, one each side of the table, on their stools of solid blocks, Pan sat beside Bevis on his haunches expectant; the slave knelt at the table.

She was bare-headed. Her black hair having escaped, fell to her waist, and her neck was tawny from the harvest sunshine. The torn brown frock loosely clung about her. Her white teeth gleamed; her naked feet were sandy like Pan's paws. Her brown eyes watched their every movement; she was intent on them. They were full of their plans of the island; she was intent on them.

She ate ravenously, more eagerly than the spaniel. Seeing this, Bevis kept cutting the preserved tongue for her, and asked if Samson was so very hungry. Loo said they were all hungry, but Samson was most hungry. He cried almost all day and all night, and woke himself up crying in the morning. Very often she left him, and went a long way down the hedge because she did not like to hear him.

“But,” objected Bevis, “my governor pays your father money, and I’m sure my mamma sends you things.”

So she did, but Loo said they never got any of them; she twisted up her mouth very peculiarly to intimate that they were intercepted by the ale-barrel. Bevis became much agitated, he said he would tell the governor, he would tell dear mamma, Samson should not cry any more. Loo should take home one of the tins of preserved tongue, and the potatoes, and all the game there was—all except the hare.

Now Bevis had always been in contact almost with these folk, but yet he had never seen; you and I live in the midst of things, but never look beneath the surface. His face became quite white; he was thoroughly upset. It was his first glance at the hard roadside of life. He said he would do all sorts of things; Loo listened pleased but dimly doubtful, she could not have explained herself, but she, nevertheless, knew that it was beyond Bevis’s power to alter these circumstances. Not that she hinted at a doubt; it was happiness enough to kneel there and listen.

Then they made her tell them how many times she had been to the island, and all about it, and as she proceeded recognized one by one, little trifles



that had previously had no meaning till now they were connected and formed a continuous strand. In her rude language it occupied a long time, and was got at by cross-questioning from one and the other. Put into order it was like this.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## NEW FORMOSA—THE CAPTIVE.

THEY arrived on Wednesday; Wednesday night Pan stayed in the hut with them, and nothing happened. Thursday night, Pan swam off to the mainland, and while he was away Loo made her first visit to the island, coming right to the hut door or curtain. Till she reached the permanent plank table under the awning and saw the remnants of the supper carelessly left on it, she had had no thought of taking anything.

The desire to share, if ever so secretly, in what they were doing alone led her there. So intense was that desire that it overcame her fear of offending them; she must at least see what they were doing. From the sedges she had watched them go to the island in the *Pinta* so many times that she was certain that was the place where they were. In wading off to the island by moonlight she caught a

glimpse of the sinking fire inside the stockade, the glow thrown up on the cliff, and so easily found her way to the hut. Had Pan been there he would have barked, but he was away; so that she came under the awning and saw all their works--the stockade, the hut, and everything, increasing her eagerness.

After she had examined the place and wondered how they could build it, she saw the remnants of the supper on the table, and remembering Samson, took them for him. The rabbit's skin was hung on the fence, and she took it also, knowing that it would fetch a trifle; in winter it would have been worth more. She thought that these things were nothing to them, that they did not care about them, and threw them aside like refuse.

The second time she came was on Saturday morning, while they were exploring Serendib. When they were on Serendib she could cross to New Formosa in broad daylight unseen, because New Formosa lay between, and the woods on it concealed any one approaching from the western side. Her mother and elder sisters were reaping in the cornfields beyond the Waste, and she was supposed to be minding the younger children, instead of which she was in the sedges watching New For-

mosa, and directly she saw Bevis and Mark pole the raft across to Serendib she waded over.

She visited the hut, took a few potatoes from the store in the cave, and spent some time wondering at everything they had there. As she was leaving they landed from the raft, and Pan sniffing her in the wood ran barking after her. He knew her very well and made no attempt to bite, still he barked as if it was his duty to tell them some one was on the island. Thinking they would run to see what it was, she climbed up into the ivy-grown oak, and they actually came underneath and looked up and did not see her.

They soon went away fancying it must be a squirrel, but Pan stopped till she descended, and then made friends and followed her to the reed-grass, whence so soon as she thought it safe she waded across to the mainland. Busy at the hut they had no idea that anything of the kind was going on, for they could not see the water from the stockade. On Sunday morning she came again, for the third time, crossing over while they were at Bamboo Island, and after satiating her curiosity and indulging in the pleasure of handling their weapons and the things in the hut, she took the cold half-cooked bacon from the shelf, and the two

slices that had been thrown to Pan and which he had left uneaten.

When they returned Pan knew she had been; he barked and first ran to the ivy-grown oak, but finding she was not there he went on and discovered her in the reed-grass. He was satisfied with having discovered her, and only licked her hand. So soon as everything was quiet she slipped across to the mainland, but in the afternoon, being so much interested and eager to see what they were doing, she tried to come over again, when Mark saw her head in the sedges. Loo crouched and kept still so long they concluded there was no one there.

It was the same afternoon that they looked at the oak for marks of claws, but her naked feet had left no trace. She would very probably have attempted it again on Monday night, but that evening they came with the letter and list of provisions, and having seen them and spoken to them, and having something to do for them, her restless eagerness was temporarily allayed. That night was the first Pan was tied up, but nothing disturbed him.

But Tuesday night, after they had been for the flag basket, the inclination to follow them became too strong, and towards the middle of the night, when, as she supposed, Pan was on shore (for she

had seen him swim off other nights), she approached the hut. To her surprise Pan, who was tied up, began to bark. Hastening away, in her hurry she crossed the spot where Pan hid his treasures and picked up the duck's drumstick, but finding it was so polished as to be useless dropped it among the reed-grass.

Wednesday night she ventured once more, but found the gate in the stockade locked; she tried to look over, when Pan set up his bark. She ran back a few yards to the bramble bushes and crouched there, trusting in the thick mist to hide her, as in fact it did. In half a minute, Mark having cut the cord, Pan rushed out in fury, as if he would fly at her throat, but coming near and seeing who it was, he dropped his howl of rage, and during the silence they supposed he was engaged in a deadly struggle.

Whether she really feared that he would spring at her, he came with such a bounce, or whether she thought Bevis and Mark would follow him and find her, she hit at Pan with the thick stick she carried. Now Pan was but just touched, for he swerved, but the big stick and the thump it made on the ground frightened him, and he yelped as if with pain and ran back. As he ran she threw a stone

after him, the stone hit the fence and shook it, and knocked off the piece of bark from the willow which they afterwards supposed to have been torn by the claw of the tiger.

Hearing them talking and dreading every moment that they would come out, she remained crouched in the brambles for a long time, and at last crept away, but stayed in the reed-grass till the sun shone, and then crossed to the mainland. Thursday she did not come, nor Thursday night, thinking it best to wait awhile and let a day and night elapse. But on Friday morning, having seen them sail to the south in the *Calypso*, while they were exploring the swamp, she waded over, and once more looked at the wonderful hut and the curious cage they had constructed about the open shed.

She was so lost in admiring these things and trying to imagine what it could be for, that they had returned very near the island before she started to go. She got as far as the reed-grass and saw them come up poling the raft.

On the raft while facing the island they could not have helped seeing her, so she waited, intending to cross when they had entered the stockade and were busy there. But Pan recognized that she had been to the stockade; they ran at once to the reed-

grass, as they now knew of the trail there, and discovered her. The reason Pan would not enter the reeds, even when hurled among them, was his fear of the thick stick.

“Stupes we were!” said Bevis.

“Most awful stupes!”

“Not half Indians!”

“Not a quarter!”

The whole thing was now so clear to them they could not understand why they had not rightly read the indications or “sign” that at last appeared so self-evident. But they were not the first who have wondered afterwards that they had not been wise *before* the event. It is so easy to read when the type is set up and the sentences printed in proper sequence; so difficult to decipher defaced inscriptions in an unknown language. When the path is made any one can walk along it and express disdainful surprise that there should ever have been any difficulty.

“But it’s not proper,” said Bevis. “I wish it had been a tiger.”

“It would have been so capital. But we’ve got a slave.”

“Where’s she to sleep to-night?”

“Anywhere in the wood.”



“ Slave, you’re to cook the hare for supper.”

“ And mind you don’t make a noise when we’re out hunting and frighten the kangaroos.”

Loo said she would be as quiet as a mouse.

“ We shall want some tea presently. I say ! ”  
said Mark, “ we’ve forgotten Charlie ! ”

He ran up on the cliff, but it was too late ; Charlie had been and waved his cap three times, in token that all was not quite right at home. Mark looked at the sun-dial ; it was nearly five. They had not had dinner till later than usual, and then Loo’s explanation and cross-examination had filled up the time. Still as Loo told them she was certain every one was quite well at home, they did not trouble about having missed Charlie. Mark wished to go shooting again round Serendib, and they started, leaving the slave in charge of the hut to cook their supper.

Mark had the matchlock, and Bevis poled the raft gently round Serendib, but the water-fowl seemed to have become more cautious, as they did not see any. Bevis poled along till they came to a little inlet, where they stopped, with blue gum branches concealing them on either hand. Mark knelt where he could see both ways along the shore ; Bevis sat back under the willows with Pan beside him.

They were so quiet that presently a black-headed reed-bunting came and looked down at them from a willow bough. Moths fluttered among the tops of the branches, the wind was so light that they flew whither they listed, instead of being borne out over the water. The brown tips of a few tall reeds moved slightly as the air came softly; they did not bow nor bend; they did but just sway, yielding assent.

Every now and then there was a rush overhead as five or six starlings passed swiftly, straight as arrows, for the firs at the head of Fir-Tree Gulf. These parties succeeding each other were perhaps separate families gathering together into a tribe at the roosting-trees. Over the distant firs a thin cloud like a black bar in the sky spread itself out, and then descended funnel-shaped into the firs. The cloud was formed of starlings, thousands of them, rising up from the trees and settling again. One bird as a mere speck would have been invisible; these legions darkened the air there like smoke.

But just beyond the raft the swallows glided, dipping their breasts and sipping as they dipped; the touch and friction of the water perceptibly checked their flight. They wheeled round and

several times approached the surface, till having at last the exact balance and the exact angle they skimmed the water, leaving no more mark than a midge.

Bevis watched them, and as he watched his senses gradually became more acute, till he could distinctly hear the faint far off sound of the waterfall at Sweet River. It rose and fell, faint and afar; the flutter of a moth's wings against the greyish willow leaves overbore and silenced it. As he listened and watched the swallows he thought, or rather felt—for he did not think from step to step upwards to a conclusion—he felt that all the power of a bird's wing is in its tip.

It was with the slender-pointed and elastic tip, the flexible and finely divided feather point that the bird flew. An artist has a cumbrous easel, a heavy framework, a solid palette which has a distinct weight, but he paints with a tiny point of camel's hair. With a camel's hair tip the swallow sweeps the sky.

That part of the wing near the body, which is thick, rigid, and contains the bones, is the easel and framework; it is the shaft through which the driving force flows, and in floating it forms a part of the plane or surface, but it does not influence

the air. The touch of the wing is in its tip. There where the feathers fine down to extreme tenuity, so that if held up the light comes through the filaments, they seem to feel the air and to curl over on it as the end of a flag on a mast curls over on itself. So the tail of a fish—his one wing—curls over at the extreme edge of its upper and lower corners, and as it unfolds presses back the water. The swallow, pure artist of flight, feels the air with his wing-tips as with fingers, and lightly fanning glides.

Over the distant firs a heron came drifting like a cloud at his accustomed hour; from over the New Nile the call of a partridge, “caer-wit—caer-wit,” sounded along the surface of the water. There was a slight movement and Bevis saw the match descending, an inverted cone of smoke darted up from the priming, and almost before the report Pan leaped overboard. Mark had watched till two moorhens were near enough together, one he shot outright and Pan caught the other.

At the report the heron staggered in the air as if a bullet had struck him, it was his sudden effort to check his course, and then recovering himself he wheeled and flew towards the woods on the mainland. Bevis said he must have a heron’s plume. To

please Mark he poled the raft to Bamboo Island, and then across to the sedgy banks at the southern extremity of New Formosa, but Mark did not get another shot. They then landed and crept quietly to Kangaroo Hill, the rabbits had grown suspicious, and they did not see one, but Pan suddenly raced across the glade—to their great annoyance—and stopped on the verge of the wood.

There he picked up a rabbit in his mouth, and they recollected the wires they had set. The rabbit had been in a wire since the morning. “It will do for Samson,” said Bevis.

When they returned to the hut the full moon—full but low down—had begun to fill the courts of the sky with her light, which permitted no pause of dusk between it and the sunset. The slave’s cheeks were red and scorched from the heat of the fire, which she had tended on her knees, and her chin and tawny neck were streaked with black marks. Handling the charred sticks with her fingers, the fingers had transferred the charcoal to her chin. The hare was well cooked considering the means, or rather the want of means at her command, perhaps it was not the first she had helped to prepare. Searching in the store-room she found a little butter with which she basted it after a manner;

they had thought the butter was all gone, they were too hasty—impatient—to look thoroughly. There was no jelly, and it was dry, but they enjoyed it very much sitting at the plank table under the shed.

They had removed the poles on one side of the shed as there was nothing now to dread, but on the other two sides the bars remained, and the flames of the expiring fire every now and then cast black bars of shadow across the table. The slave would have been only too glad to have stayed on the island all night—if they had lent her a great-coat or rug to roll up in she would have slept anywhere in the courtyard—but she said Samson would be so wretched without her, he would be frightened and miserable. She must go; she would come back in the morning about ten.

They filled the flag-basket for her with the moorhens, the rabbit, the dab-chick and thrush, and a tin of preserved tongue. There were still some fragments of biscuit; she said Samson would like these best of all. Thus laden, she would have waded to the mainland, but they would not let her—they took the raft and ferried her over, and promised to fetch her in the morning if she would whistle, she could whistle like a boy. To Loo that voyage on the raft,

short as it was, was something beyond compare. Loo had to pass the prickly stubble fields with her bare feet—stubble to the naked foot is as if the broad earth were a porcupine's back. But long practice had taught her how to wind round at the edge where there was a narrow and thistly band of grass, for thistles she did not care.

“ Good-night, slave.”

They poled back to the island, and having fastened Pan up, were going to bed, when Bevis said he wanted the matchlock loaded with ball as he meant to rise early to try for a heron. Mark fired it off, and in the stillness they heard the descending shot rattle among the trees. The matchlock was loaded with ball, and Bevis set the clock of his mind to wake at three. It was still early in the evening, but they had had little or no rest lately, and fell asleep in an instant; they were asleep long before the slave had crept in at her window and quieted Samson with broken biscuits.

The alarm of his mind awoke Bevis about the time he wished. He did not wake Mark, and wishing to go even more quietly than usual left Pan fastened up; the spaniel gave a half-whine, but crouched as Bevis spoke and he recognized the potential anger in the tones of his voice. From the

stockade Bevis went along that side of the island where the weeds were, and passed the Calypso which they had left on that side the previous evening. He went by the "blazed" trees leading to Kangaroo Hill, then past the reed-grass where they had captured the slave, but saw nothing. Thence he moved noiselessly up through the wood to the more elevated spot under the spruce firs where he thought he could see over that end of the island without being seen or heard.

There was nothing, the overthrown willow trunk lay still in the water flush with the surface, and close to it there was a little ripple coming out from under a bush, which he supposed was caused by a water-rat moving there. Till now he had been absorbed in what he was doing, but just then, remembering the cones which hung at the tops of the tall firs, he looked up and became conscious of the beauty of the morning, for it was more open there, and he could see a breadth of the sky.

The sun had not yet stood out from the orient, but his precedent light shone through the translucent blue. Yet it was not blue, nor is there any word, nor is a word possible to convey the feeling unless one could be built up of signs and symbols like those in the book of the magician, which glowed and



burned to and fro the page. For the blue of the precious sapphire is thick to it, the turquoise dull, these hard surfaces are no more to be compared to it than sand and gravel. They are but stones, hard, cold, pitiful, that which gives them their lustre is the light. Through delicate porcelain sometimes the light comes, and it is not the porcelain, it is the light that is lovely. But porcelain is clay, and the light is shorn, checked, and shrunken. Down through the beauteous azure came the Light itself, pure, unreflected Light, untouched, untarnished even by the dew-sweetened petal of a flower, descending, flowing like a wind, a wind of glory sweeping through the blue. A luminous purple glowing as Love glows in the cheek, so glowed the passion of the heavens.

Two things only reach the soul. By touch there is indeed emotion. But the light in the eye, the sound of the voice! the soul trembles and like a flame leaps to meet them. So to the luminous purple azure his heart ascended.

Bevis, the lover of the sky, gazed and forgot; forgot as we forget that our pulses beat, having no labour to make them. Nor did he hear the south wind singing in the fir tops.

I do not know how any can slumber with this

over them ; how any can look down at the clods. The greatest wonder on earth is that there are any not able to see the earth's surpassing beauty. Such moments are beyond the chronograph and any measure of wheels, the passing of one cog may be equal to a century, for the mind has no time. What an incredible marvel it is that there are human creatures that slumber threescore and ten years, and look down at the clods and then say, " We are old, we have lived seventy years." Seventy years ! The passing of one cog is longer ; seven hundred times seventy years would not equal the click of the tiniest cog while the mind was living its own life. Sleep and clods, with the glory of the earth, and the sun, and the sea, and the endless ether around us ! Incredible marvel this sleep and clods and talk of years. But I suppose it was only a second or two, for some slight movement attracted him, and he looked, and instantly the vision above was forgotten.

Upon the willow trunk prone in the water, he saw a brown creature larger than any animal commonly seen, but chiefly in length, with sharp-pointed, triangular ears set close to its head. In his excitement he did not recognize it as he aimed. Behind the fir trunks he was hidden, and he was on high ground—animals seldom look up—the creature's

head too was farthest from him. He steadied the long, heavy barrel against a fir trunk, heedless of a streak of viscous turpentine sap which his hand pressed.

The trigger was partly drawn—his arm shook, he sighed—he checked himself, held his breath tight, and fired. The ball plunged and the creature was jerked up rebounding and fell in the water. He dashed down, leaped in—as it happened the water was very shallow—and seized it as it splashed a little from mere muscular contraction. Aimed at the head, the ball had passed clean through between the shoulders and buried itself in the willow trunk. The animal was dead before he touched it. He tore home and threw it on the bed: “Mark!”

“O!” said Mark. “An otter!”

Their surprise was great, for they had never suspected an otter. No one had ever seen one there that they had heard of, no one had even supposed it possible. These waters were far from a river, they were fed by rivulets supporting nothing beyond a kingfisher. To get there the otter must have ascended the brook from the river, a bold and adventurous journey, passing hatchés and farm-houses set like forts by the water’s edge, passing mills astride the stream.

The hare had been admired, but it was nothing to the otter, which was as rare there as a black fox. They looked at its broad flat head—hold a cat's head up under the chin, that is a little like it—the sharp, triangular ears set close to the head, the webbed feet, the fur, the long tail decreasing to a blunt point. It must be preserved; they could skin it, but could not stuff it; still it must be done. The governor must see it, mamma, the Jolly Old Moke, Frances, Val, Cecil, Charlie, Ted, Big Jack—all. Must!

This was the cause then of the curious wave they had seen which moved without wind—no, Mark remembered that once being near the wave he had seen something white under the surface. The wave was not caused by the otter, but most likely it was the otter Pan had scented on Bamboo Island when he seemed so excited, and they could see no reason. The otter must be preserved—must!

While they breakfasted, while they bathed, this was the talk. Presently they heard the slave's whistle and fetched her on the raft. Now, Loo, cunning hussy, waited till she was safely landed on the island, and then told them that dear mamma and Frances were going that day up to Jack's to see them. Loo had been sent for to go to the town on

an errand, and she had heard it mentioned. Instead of going on the errand she ran to play slave.

Charlie had had some knowledge of this yesterday, and waved his cap instead of the white handkerchief as a warning, but they did not see it. If mamma and Frances drove up to Jack's to see them, of course it would be at once discovered that they were not at Jack's, and then what a noise there would be.

“Hateful,” said Mark. “It seems to me we're getting near the hateful ‘Other Side.’”

## CHAPTER XV.

## NEW FORMOSA—THE BLACK SAIL.

Now, at the Other Side, i.e. at home, things had gone smoothly for them till the day before, in a measure owing to the harvest, and for the rest to the slow ways of old-fashioned country people. When they had gone away to Jack's before in disgrace, Bevis's mother could not rest, the ticking of the clock in the silent house, the distant beat of the blacksmith's hammer, every little circumstance of the day jarred upon her. But on this occasion they had, she believed, gone for their own pleasure, and though she missed them, they were not apart and separated by a gulf of anger.

Busy with the harvest, there was no visiting, no one came down from Jack's, and so the two slipped for the moment out of the life of the hamlet. Presently Bevis's short but affectionate letter arrived, and prevented any suspicion arising, for no one noticed the postmark. Mamma wrote by return,

and when her letter addressed to Bevis was delivered at Jack's you would have supposed the secret would have come out. So it would in town life—a letter would have been written saying that Bevis was not there, and asking where to forward it.

But not so at the old house in the hills. Jack's mother put it on the shelf, remarking that no doubt Bevis was coming, and would be there to-morrow or next day. As for Jack he was too busy to think about it, and if he had not been he would have taken little notice, knowing from former experience that Bevis might turn up at any moment. The letter remained on the shelf.

On the Saturday the carrier left a parcel for Bevis—at any other time a messenger would have been sent, and then their absence would have been discovered—but no one could be spared from the field. The parcel contained clean collars, cuffs, and similar things which they never thought of taking with them, but which mamma did not forget. Like the letter the parcel was put aside for Bevis when he did come; the parcel indeed was accepted as proof positive that he was coming. Jack's mother never touched a pen if she could by any means avoid it, old country people put off letter-writing till absolutely compelled.

On the Sunday afternoon while Bevis and Mark were lying under the fir-trees in New Formosa, dear mamma, always thinking of her boy and his friend, was up in her bedroom turning over the yellowish fly-leaves at the end of an old Book of Common Prayer, too large to go to and fro to church, and which was always in the room. Upon these fly-leaves she had written down from time to time the curious little things that Bevis had said. In the very early morning (before he could talk) he used to sit up in the bed while she still slept, and try to pick her eyelids open with finger and thumb. What else could a dumb creature do that wished to be looked at with loving eyes and fondled?

There it was entered, too, how when he was a "Bobby," all little boys are "Bobbies," he called himself Bobaysche, and said mejjible-bone for vegetable marrow. Desiring to speak of wheat, and unable to recall its proper term, he called it bread-seed; and one day stroking his favourite kitten asked "If God had a pussy?" It was difficult for him to express what time he meant, "When that yesterday that came yesterday went away" was his paraphrase for the day before yesterday.

One day in the sitting-room he fancied himself a



hunter with a dart, and seizing the poker balanced it over his head. He became so excited he launched his dart at the flying quarry, and it went through the window-pane. In a day or two—workmen are not to be got in a hurry in the country—an old glazier trudged out to put in fresh glass, and while he cut out the dry putty and measured his glass, and drew the diamond point across, Bevis emptied his tool-basket and admired the chisels and hammers. By and by, tired of things which he was not permitted to use lest he should cut himself, he threw them in and handed the basket to the workman: “Here,” he said, “Here—take your toys!”

Toys indeed. The old man had laboured fifty years with these toys till his mind had become with monotony as horny and unimpressionable as his hand. He smiled: he did not see the other meaning that those childish words convey.

Nothing then pleased Bevis so much as moving furniture, the noise and disturbance so distasteful to us was a treat to him. It was “thunder-boy” and “cuckoo-boy,” as the thunder rolled or the cuckoo called; he could not conceive anything being caused unseen without human agency.

The Deity was human.

“Ah!” said he thoughtfully, “He got a high

ladder and climbed up over the hedges to make the thunder."

"Has He got any little Bobbies?"

"No."

"I suppose He had when He was down here?"

"No."

"No" (with pity) "He didn't have no peoples."

The pleasure of refusal was not to be resisted.

"Now do, Bobby, dear?"

"I san't: say it again."

"O! *do* do it."

"I san't: say it again."

"Now, *do*."

"I san't," shaking his head, as much as to say it's very dreadful of me, but I shan't. They could not explain to him that the glowing sunset was really so far away, he wanted to go to it. "It's only just over the blackberry hedge." Some one was teaching him that God loved little boys; "But does he love ladies too?"

As for papa he had to tell stories by the hour, day after day, and when he ceased and said he could not remember any more, Bevis frowned. "Rack your brains! rack your brains!" said he. A nightingale built in the hedge near the house, and all night long her voice echoed in the bed-

room. Listening one night as he was in bed he remarked, "The nightingale has two songs: first he sings 'Sir-rup—sir-rup,' and then he sings 'Tweet.'"

For his impudence he had a box on the ear: "Pooh! It went pop like a foxglove," he laughed.

At Brighton he was taken over the Pavilion, and it was some trouble to explain to him that this fine house had been built for a gentleman called a king. By-and-by, in the top stories, rather musty from old carpets and hangings: "Hum!" said he; "seems stuffy. I can smell that gentleman's dinner," i.e. George the Fourth's.

Visiting a trim suburban villa, while the ladies talked they sent him out on the close-mown lawn to play. When he came in, "Well, dear, did you enjoy yourself?"

"Don't think much of *your* garden," said Bevis; "no buttercups."

At prayers: "Make Bobby a good boy, and see that you do everything I tell you."

"You longered your promise," did not fulfil it for a long time. "Straight yourselves," when out walking he wished them to go straight on and not turn. "Round yourselves, round yourselves," when he wanted them to take a turning. When

he grew up to be a big man he expressed his determination to "knock down the policeman and kill the hanging-man," then he could do as he liked. "Tiffeck" was the cat's cough.

Driving over Westminster Bridge the first time, and seeing the Houses of Parliament, which reminded him of his toy bricks, he inquired "If there was anything inside?" Older people have asked that of late years. As he did not get his wishes quickly, it appeared to him there were "too many perhapses in this place:" he wanted things done "punctually at now." A waterfall was the "tumbling water."

They told him there was one part of us that did not die. "Then," he said directly, "I suppose that is the thinking part." What more, O! Descartes, Plato, philosophers, is there in your tomes? The crucifixion hurt his feelings very much, the cruel nails, the unfeeling spear: he looked at the picture a long time, and then turned over the page, saying, "If God had been there He would not have let them do it."

"What are you going to be when you're a man?" asked grandpa. "An engineer, a lawyer?"

"Pooh! I'm going to be a king, and wear a gold crown!"

A glowing March sunset made the tops of the elms, red with flower before the leaf, show clear against the sky. "They look like red seaweed dipped in water," he said.

Such were some of the short and disconnected jottings in mamma's prayer-book: mere jottings, but well she could see the scene in her mind when the words were said. Latest of all, the second visit to the seaside, where, after rioting on the sands and hurling pebbles in the summer waves, suddenly he stopped, looked up at her and said, "O! wasn't it a good thing the sea was made!" It was indeed.

Every one being so much in the field, mamma was left alone, and wearying of it, asked Frances to come up frequently to her: Frances was willing enough to do so, especially as she could talk unrestrainedly of Big Jack, so that it was a pleasure to her to come. At last, on the Friday, as Bevis did not write again, his mother proposed that they should drive up to Jack's, and see how the boys were on the morrow. Frances was discreetly delighted: Jack could not come down to see her just now, and with Bevis's mother she could go up and see him with propriety. So it was agreed that the dog-cart should be ready early on Saturday afternoon. Charlie learned something of this—he

played in and out the place, and waved his cap thrice as a warning.

Now, in the kitchen on Friday evening there was a curious talk of Bevis and Mark. Had it not been for the harvest something would have crept out about them among the cottagers. Such inveterate gossipers would have sniffed out something, some one would have supposed this, another would have said they were not at Big Jack's, a third might have caught a glimpse of them when on the mainland. But the harvest filled their hands with work, sealed their eyes, and shut their mouths. An earthquake would hardly disturb the reapers. So soon as they had completed the day's work they fell asleep. Pan's nocturnal rambles would have been noticed had it not been for this, though he might have come down from Jack's.

However, as it chanced, not a word was said till the Friday evening, when there came into the kitchen a labouring man, sent by his master to have some talk with the Bailiff respecting a proposed bargain. Every evening the Bailiff took his quart in the kitchen, and though it was summer always in the same corner by the hearth. He had no home, an old and much-cruised bachelor: he had a dim craving for company, and he liked

to sit there and sip while Polly worked round briskly.

A deal of gossip was got through in that kitchen. Men came in and out, they lingered on the door-step with their fingers on the latch just to add one more remark. That evening when the bargain, a minor matter, had been discussed, this man, with much roundabout preliminary solemnly declared that as he had been working up in Rushland's field (about half a mile from the New Sea), he had distinctly heard Bevis and Mark talking to each other, and it seemed to him that the sound came over the water.

Sometimes he said he could hear folk talk at a great distance, four or five times as far off as most could, and had frequently told people what they had been conversing about when they had been a mile or more away. He could not hear like this always, but once now and then, and he was quite sure that he had heard Master Bevis and Master Mark talking something about shooting, and that the sound came from over the water. He did not believe they were at Jack's, there was "summat" (something) very curious about it.

The Bailiff and Polly and the visitor turned this over and over, and gossiped, and discussed it for

some time, till the man had to go. They never for a moment doubted the perfect truth of what he had stated. Half-educated people are always ready to believe the marvellous, nor was there anything so unusual in this claim to a second sight of hearing, so to say. Once now and then, in the country, you meet with people who lay serious claim to possess the power, and most astonishing instances are related of it.

Whether being so much in the open air sharpens the senses, whether the sound actually did travel over the water, it is not possible to say, or whether some little suspicion of the real facts had got out, and this fellow cunningly devised his story knowing that sooner or later confirmation of his wonderful powers of hearing would be derived in the discovery of what Bevis had been doing. The only persons who could tell were John Young and Loo: the one was spell-bound by the bribe he knew he should obtain, Loo was much too eager to share the game to breathe a word. Poachers, however, get about at odd hours in odd places. and see things they are not meant to.

Still in the country the belief lingers that here and there a person does possess the power, and the story so worked upon the Bailiff and Polly, that at



last Polly ventured in to tell her mistress. Her mistress at once dismissed it as ridiculous. She was too well educated to dream dreams. Yet when she retired, do you know! she sat a little while and thought about it, so contagious is superstition. In the morning she sent down to Frances to come an hour earlier—she wanted to see Bevis.

Frances came, and the dog-cart was at the door when Loo (who had been sent on an errand to the town—a common thing on Saturdays) rushed up to the door, thrust a letter into mamma's hand, and darted away.

“Why!” said she. “It's Bevis—why!” she read aloud, Frances looking over her shoulder:—“Dear Mamma, Please come up to the place where the boats are kept directly you get this and mind you come this very minute” (twice dashed). “We are coming home from New Formosa in our ship the Calypso, and want you to be there to see the things we have brought you, and to hear all about it. Mind and be sure and come this very minute, please.”

Wondering and excited with curiosity, the two ladies ran as fast as they could up the meadow footpath, and along the bank of the New Sea, till they came to a clear place where the trees did

not interfere with the view. Then, a long way up, they saw a singular-looking boat with a black sail.

“There they are!”

“They’re coming!”

“What *can* they have been doing?”

“That is not the *Pinta*!”

“This has a black sail!”

The sail was black because it was the rug, an old-fashioned one, black one side and grey the other. After long discussion Bevis and Mark had decided that the time had come when they must return from the island, for if Bevis’s mother went to Jack’s and found they were not there, her anxiety would be terrible, and they could not think of it. So Bevis wrote a letter and sent Loo back with it at once, and she was to watch and see if his mother did as she was asked. If she started for the shore Loo was to raise a signal, a handkerchief they lent her for the purpose.

Some time after Loo went they embarked on the raft, and drifted slowly down before the south wind till they reached the Mozambique, where they stayed the raft’s progress with their poles till Loo displayed the signal. The sail was then hoisted, and they bore down right before the wind.

With dark sail booming out the *Calypso* surged

ahead, the mariners saw the two ladies on the shore, and waved their hands and shouted. Bevis steered her into port, and she grounded beside the *Pinta*. The first caress and astonishment over: “Where are your hats?” said Frances.

“Where are your collars?” said his mother. “And gracious, child! just look at his neck!”

As for hats and collars they had almost forgotten their existence, and having passed most of the time in shirt sleeves like gold-miners, with necks and chests exposed, they were as brown as if they had been in the tropics. Mark especially was tanned, completely tanned: Bevis was too fair to brown well. The sun and the wind had purified his skin almost to transparency with a rosy olive behind the whiteness. There was a gleam in his eye, the clear red of his lips—lips speak the state of the blood—the easy motion of the limbs, the ringing sound of the voice, the upright back, all showed primeval health. Both of them were often surprised at their own strength.

In those days of running, racing, leaping, exploring, swimming, the skin nude to the sun, and wind and water, they built themselves up of steel, steel that would bear the hardest wear of the world. Had they been put in an open boat and thrust forth

to sea like the viking of old, it would not have hurt them.

Frances played with Bevis's golden ringlets, but did not kiss him as she had used to do. He looked too much a man. She placed her hand on her brother's shoulder, but did not speak to him as once she had done. Something told her that this was not the boy she ordered to and fro.

They could not believe that the two had really spent all the time on an island. This was the eleventh morn since they had left—it could not be: yet there was the raft in evidence.

“Let us row them up in the *Pinta*,” said Mark.

“In a minute,” said Bevis. “Get her ready; I'll be back in a minute—half a second.” He ran along the bank to a spot whence he knew he could see the old house at home through the boughs. He wanted just to look at it—there is no house so beautiful as the one you were born in—and then he ran back.

There was a little water in the boat but not much, they hauled out some of the ballast, the ladies got in and were rowed direct to *New Formosa*. The stockade—so well defended, the cage before the door, the hut, the cave, their interest knew no bounds.

“But you did not really sleep on this,” said Bevis’s mother in a tone of horror, finding the bed was nothing but fir branches: she could not be reconciled to the idea.

The matchlock, the niche for the lantern, the marks where their fires had been, the sun-dial, there was no detail they did not examine: and lastly they went all round the island by the well-worn path. This occupied a considerable time, it was now too late to drive up to Jack’s and the object was removed, but Bevis’s mother, ever anxious for others’ happiness, whispered to Frances that she would write and send a messenger, and ask Jack to come down to-morrow—surely he could spare Sunday—to bring back the parcel, and see the wonderful island.

When at last they landed the ladies, there was Charlie on the bank, and Cecil and Val, who had somehow got wind of it—they were wild with curiosity not unmingled with resentment. These had to be rowed to New Formosa and they stayed longer even than the ladies, and insisted on a shot each with the matchlock. So it was a most exciting afternoon for these returned shipwrecked folks. In the evening they had the dog-cart, and drove in to Latten with the otter to have it preserved.

They did not see much or think much of the governor till towards supper-time—Mark had snatched half an hour to visit his Jolly Old Moke and returned like the wind. The governor was calmly incredulous: he professed to disbelieve that they had done it all themselves, there must have been a man or two to help them. And if it was true, how did they suppose they were going to pay for all the damage they had done to the trees on the island?

This was a difficult question, they did not know that the governor could cut the trees if he chose, indeed they had never thought about it. But having faced so many dangers they were not going to tremble at this. They could not quite make the governor out, whether he was chaffing them, or whether he really disbelieved, or whether it was a cover to his anger. In truth, he hardly knew himself, but he could not help admiring the ingenuity with which they had effected all this.

He was a shrewd man, the governor, and he saw that Bevis and Mark had the ladies on their side; what is the use of saying anything when the ladies have made up their minds? Besides, there was this about it at any rate: they had gained the primeval health of the primeval forest-dwellers. Before

gleaming eyes, red lips, sun-burned and yet clear skin, ringing voices and shouts of laughter, how could he help but waver and finally melt and become as curious as the rest.

In the end they actually promised, as a favour, to row him up to their island to-morrow.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## SHOOTING WITH DOUBLE-BARRELS.

THE governor having been rowed to the island, examined the fortifications, read the journal, and looked at the iron-pipe gun, and afterwards reflecting upon these things came to the conclusion that it would be safer and better in every way to let Bevis have the use of a good breech-loader. He evidently must shoot, and if so he had better shoot with a proper gun. When this decision was known, Mark's governor could do nothing less, and so they both had good guns put into their hands.

In truth, the prohibition had long been rather hollow, more traditional than effectual. Bevis had accompanied his governor several autumns in the field, and shot occasionally, and he had been frequently allowed to try his skill at the starlings flying to and fro the chimney. Besides which they shot with Jack and knew all about it perfectly well. They were fortunate in living in the era of the



breech-loader which is so much safer than the old muzzle-loading gun. There was hardly a part of the muzzle-loader which in some way or other did not now and then contribute to accidents. With the breech-loader you can in a moment remove the very possibility of accident by pulling out the cartridges and putting them in your pocket.

Bevis and Mark knew very well how to shoot, both from actual if occasional practice, and from watching those who did shoot. The governor, however, desirous that they should excel, gave them a good drilling in this way.

Bevis had to study his position at the moment when he stopped and lifted the gun. His left foot was to be set a little in front of the other, and he was to turn very slightly aside, the left shoulder forwards. He was never to stand square to the game. He was to stand upright, perfectly upright like a bolt. The back must not stoop nor the shoulders be humped and set up till the collar of the coat was as high as the poll. Humping the shoulders at the same time contracts the chest, and causes the coat in front to crease, and these creases are apt to catch the butt of the gun as it comes to the shoulder and divert it from its proper place.

There is no time to correct this in the act of shooting, so that the habit of a good position should be acquired that it may be avoided. He had, too, to hold his head nearly upright and not to crane his neck forward till the cheek rested on the stock while the head was aside in the manner of the magpie peering into a letter. He was to stand upright, with his chest open and his shoulders thrown back, like Robin Hood with his six foot yew drawing the arrow to his ear.

Bevis was made to take his double-barrel upstairs, into the best bedroom—this is the advantage of the breech loader, take the cartridges out and it is as harmless as a fire-iron—where there was a modern cheval-glass. The mirrors down stairs were old and small, and the glass not perfectly homogeneous so that unless the reflection of the face fell just in the centre a round chin became elongated. Before the cheval-glass he was ordered to stand sideways and throw up the gun quickly to the present, then holding it there, to glance at himself.

He saw his frame arched forward, his back bent, his shoulders drawn together, the collar of his coat up to his poll behind, the entire position cramped and awkward. Now he understood how unsightly it looked, and how difficult it is to shoot well in

that way. Many good sportsmen by dint of twenty years' cramping educate their awkwardness to a successful pitch. It needs many years to do it: but you can stand upright at once.

He altered his posture in a moment, looked, and saw himself standing easily, upright but easily, and found that his heart beat without vibrating the barrel as it will if the chest be contracted, and that breathing did not throw the gun out of level. Instead of compressing himself to the gun, the gun fitted to him. The gun had been his master and controlled him, now he was the master of the gun.

Next he had to practise the bringing of the gun to the shoulder—the act of lifting it—and to choose the position from which he would usually lift it. He had his free choice, but was informed that when once he had selected it he must adhere to it. Some generally carry the gun on the hollow of the left arm with the muzzle nearly horizontal to the left. Some under the right arm with the left hand already on the stock. Some with the muzzle upwards aslant with both hands also. Now and then one waits with the butt on his hip: one swings his gun anyhow in one hand like an umbrella: a third tosses it over his shoulder with the hammers down and the trigger-guard up, and jerks the

muzzle over when the game rises. Except in snap-shooting, when the gun must of necessity be held already half way to the shoulder, it matters very little which the sportsman does, nor from what position he raises his gun.

But the governor insisted that it did matter everything that the position should be habitual. That in order to shoot with success, the gun must not be thrown up now one way and now another, but must almost invariably, certainly as a rule, be lifted from one recognized position. Else so many trifling circumstances interfere with the precision without which nothing can be done, a crease of the coat, a button, the sleeve, or you might, forgetting yourself, knock the barrel against a bough.

To avoid these you must take your mind from the game to guide your gun to the shoulder. If you took your mind from the game the continuity of the glance was broken, and the aim snapped in two, not to be united. Therefore, he insisted on Bevis choosing a position in which he would habitually carry his gun when in the presence of game.

Bevis at once selected that with the gun in the hollow of his left arm, the muzzle somewhat upwards; this was simply imitation, because the

governor held it in that way. It is, however, a good position, easy for walking or waiting for ground game or for game that flies, for hare or snipe, for everything except thick cover or brush-wood, or moving in a double mound, when you must perforce hold the gun almost perpendicular before you to escape the branches. This being settled, and the governor having promised him faithfully that if he saw him carry it any other way he would lock the gun up for a week each time, they proceeded to practise the bringing of the gun up to the shoulder, that is, to the present.

The left hand should always grasp the stock at the spot where the gun balances, where it can be poised on the palm like the beam of weights and scales. Instead of now taking it just in front of the trigger-guard, now on the trigger-guard, now six or seven inches in front, carelessly seizing it in different places as it happens, the left hand should always come to the same spot. It will do so undeviatingly with a very little practice and without thought or effort, as your right hand meets your friend's to shake hands.

If it comes always to the same spot the left hand does not require shifting after the butt touches the shoulder. The necessary movements are reduced

to a minimum. Grasping it then at the balance lift it gently to the shoulder, neither hastily nor slowly, but with quiet ease. Bevis was particularly taught not to throw the butt against his shoulder with a jerk, he was to bring it up with the deliberate motion of "hefting." "Hefting" is weighing in the hands—you are asked to "heft" a thing—to take it and feel by raising it what you think it weighs.

With this considerate ease Bevis was to "heft" his gun to the shoulder, and only to press it there sufficiently to feel that the butt touched him. He was not to hold it loosely, nor to pull it against his shoulder as if he were going to mortice it there. He was just to feel it. If you press the gun with a hard iron stiffness against the shoulder you cannot move it to follow the flying bird: you pull against and resist yourself. On the other hand, if loosely held the gun is apt to shift.

The butt must touch his shoulder at the same place every time. Those who have not had this pointed out to them frequently have the thick or upper part of the butt high above the shoulder, and really put nothing but the narrow and angular lower part against the body. At another time, throwing it too low, they have to bend and stoop

over the gun to get an aim. Or it is pitched up to the chest, and not to the shoulder at all—to the edge of the chest, or again to the outside of the shoulder on the arm. They never bring it twice to the same place and must consequently change the inclination of the head at every shot. A fresh effort has, therefore, to be gone through each time to get the body and the gun to fit.

Bevis was compelled to bring the butt of his gun up every time to the same spot well on his shoulder, between his chest and his arm, with the hollow of the butt fitting, like a ball in its socket. One of the great objects of this mechanical training was that he should not have to pay the least attention to the breech of the gun in aiming. All that he had to do with was the sight. His gun, when he had thus practised, came up exactly level at once.

It required no shifting, no moving of the left hand further up or lower down the stock, no pushing of the butt higher up the shoulder, or to this side or that. His gun touched his shoulder at a perfect level, as straight as if he had thrust out his hand and pointed with the index finger at the bird. Not the least conscious effort was needed, there was nothing to correct, above all there was not a second's interruption of the continuity of glance—the look at

the game. The breech was level with the sight instantly; all he had further to do with was the sight.

With both eyes open he never lost view of the bird for the tenth of a second. The governor taught him to keep his eyes, both open, on the bird as it flew, and his gun came up to his line of sight. The black dot at the end of the barrel—as the sight appears in the act of shooting—had then only to cover the bird, and the finger pressed the trigger. Up to the moment that the black dot was adjusted to the mark all was automatic.

The governor's plan was first to reduce the movements to a minimum; secondly, to obtain absolute uniformity of movement; thirdly, to secure by this absolute uniformity a perfect unconsciousness of effort of movement at all; in short, automatic movement; and all this in order that the continuity of glance, the look at the game, might not be interrupted for the merest fraction of a second. That glance was really the aim, the gun fitted itself to the gaze just as you thrust out your index finger and point, the body really did the work of aiming itself.

All the mind had to do was to effect the final adjustment of the black dot of the sight. Very often when the gun was thus brought up no such



adjustment was necessary, it was already there, so that there was nothing to do but press the trigger. It then looked as if the gun touched the shoulder and was discharged instantaneously.

He was to look at the bird, to keep both eyes on it, to let his gun come to his eyes, still both open, adjust the dot and fire. There was no binocular trouble because he was never to stay to run his eyes up the barrels—that would necessitate removing his glance from the game, a thing strictly forbidden. Only the dot. He saw only the dot, and the dot gave no binocular trouble. The barrels were entirely ignored; the body had already adjusted them. Only the dot. The sight—this dot—is the secret of shooting.

The governor said if you shut the left eye you cannot retain your glance on the bird, the barrels invariably obscure it for a moment, and the mind has to catch itself again. He would not let Bevis take his eyes off it—he would rather he missed. Bevis was also to be careful not to let his right hand hang with all the weight of his arm on the stock, a thing which doubles the labour of the left arm as it has to uphold the weight of the gun and of the right arm too, and thus the muzzle is apt to be depressed.

He was not to blink, but to look through the explosion. Hundreds of sportsmen blink as they pull the trigger. He was to let his gun smoothly follow the bird, even in the act of the explosion, exactly as the astronomer's clockwork equatorial follows a star. There was to be continuity of glance; and thus at last he brought down his snipes right and left, as it seemed, with a sweep of the gun.

The astronomers discovered "personal equation." Three men are set to observe the occultation of a satellite by Jupiter, and to record the precise time by pressing a lever. One presses the lever the hundredth of a second too soon, the second the hundredth of a second too late, the third sometimes one and sometimes the other and sometimes is precisely accurate. The mean of these three gives the exact time. In shooting one man pulls the trigger a fraction too soon, another a fraction too late, a third is uncertain. If you have been doing your best to shoot well, and after some years still fail, endeavour to discover your "personal equation," and by correcting that you may succeed much better. It is a common error and unsuspected, so is blinking—you may shoot for years and never know that you blink.

Bevis's personal equation was a second too quick.

In this, as in everything, he dashed at it. His snipes were cut down as if you had whipped them over: his hares were mangled; his partridges smashed. The dot was dead on them, and a volley of lead was poured in. The governor had a difficulty to get him to give "law" enough.

He acquired the mechanical precision so perfectly that he became careless and shot gracelessly. The governor lectured him and hung his gun up for a week as a check. By degrees he got into the easy quiet style of finished shooting.

The two learned the better and the quicker because there were two. The governor went through the same drill with Mark, motion for motion, word for word. Then when they were out in the field the one told the other, they compared their experiences, checked each other's faults, and commended success. They learned the better and the quicker because they had no keeper to find everything for them, and warn them when to expect a hare, and when a bird. They had to find it for themselves like Pan. Finally, they learned the better because at first they shot at anything that took their fancy, a blackbird or a wood-pigeon, and were not restricted to one class of bird with the same kind of motion every time it was flushed.

Long before trusted with guns they had gathered from the conversation they constantly heard around them to aim over a bird that flies straight away because it usually rises gradually for some distance, and between the ears of the running hare. If the hare came towards them they shot at the grass before his paws. A bird flying aslant away needs the sight to be put in front of it, the allowance increasing as the angle approaches a right angle; till when a bird crosses, straight across, you must allow a good piece, especially if he comes with the wind.

Two cautions the governor only gave them, one to be extremely careful in getting through hedges that the muzzles of their guns pointed away, for branches are most treacherous, and secondly never to put the forefinger inside the trigger-guard till in the act of lifting the gun to the shoulder.

For awhile their territory was limited as the governor, who shot with Mark's, did not want the sport spoiled by these beginners. But as September drew to a close they could wander almost where they liked, and in October anywhere, on promise of not shooting pheasants should they come across any.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## AMERICAN SNAP-SHOOTING.

MEANTIME they taught Big Jack to swim. He came down to look at the cave on New Formosa, and Frances so taunted and tormented him because the boys could swim and he could not, that at last the giant, as it were, heaved himself up for the effort, and rode down every morning. Bevis and Mark gave him lessons, and in a fortnight he could swim four or five strokes to the railings. Directly he had the stroke he got on rapidly, for those vast lungs of his, formed by the air of the hills, floated him as buoyantly as a balloon. So soon as ever he could swim, Frances turned round and tormented him because the boys had taught him and not he the boys.

Bevis and Mark could not break off the habit of bathing every morning, and they continued to do so far into October, often walking with bare feet on the

hoar-frost on the grass, and breaking the thin ice at the edge of the water by tapping it with their toes. The bath was now only a plunge and out again, but it gave them a pleasant glow all day, and hardened them as the smith hardens iron.

Up at Jack's they tried again with his little rifle, and applying what they had learnt from the match-lock while shooting with ball, soon found out the rifle's peculiarities. It only wanted to be understood and coaxed like everything else. Then they could hit anything with it up to sixty yards. Beyond that the bullet, being beaten out of shape when driven home by the ramrod, could not be depended upon. In October they could shoot where they pleased on condition of sparing the pheasants for their governors. There were no preserved covers, but a few pheasants wandered away and came there. October was a beautiful month.

One morning Tom, the ploughboy, and some time bird-keeper, came to the door and asked to see them. "There be a pussy in the mound," he said, with the sly leer peculiar to those who bring information about game. He "knowed" there was a hare in the mound, and yet he could not have given any positive reason for it. He had not actually seen the hare enter the mound, nor found the run, nor

the form, neither had he Pan's intelligent nostrils, but he "knowed" it all the same.

Rude as he looked he had an instinctive perception—supersensuous perception—that there was a hare on that mound, which twenty people might have passed without the least suspicion. "Go into the kitchen," said Bevis, and Tom went with a broad smile of content on his features, for he well knew that to be sent into the kitchen was equivalent to a cheque drawn on the cellar and the pantry.

Bevis and Mark took their guns, Pan followed very happily, and they walked beside the hedges down towards the place, which was at some distance. The keenness of the morning air, from which the sun had not yet fully distilled the frost of the night, freshened their eagerness for sport. A cart laden with swedes crossed in front of them, and though the sun shone the load of roots indicated that winter was approaching. They passed an oak growing out in the field.

Under the tree there stood an aged man with one hand against the hoary trunk, and looking up into the tree as well as his bowed back, which had stiffened in its stoop, and his rounded shoulders would let him. His dress was old and sober tinted, his smock frock greyish, his old hat had lost all

colour. He was hoary like the lichen-hung oak trunk. From his face the blood had dried away, leaving it a dull brown, the tan of seventy harvest fields burned into the skin, a sapless brown wrinkled face like a withered oak leaf.

Though he looked at them, and Bevis nodded, his eyes gave no sign of recognition; like a dead animal's, there was no light in them, the glaze was settling. In the evening it might occur to him that he had seen them in the morning. His years pressed heavy on him, very heavy like a huge bundle of sticks; he was lost under his age. All those years "Jumps" had never once been out of sight of the high Down yonder (not far from Jack's), the landmark of the place. Within sight of that hill he was born, within such radius he had laboured, and therein he was decaying, slowly, very slowly, like an oak branch. James was his real name, corrupted to "Jumps;" as "Jumps" he had been known for two generations, and he would have answered to no other.

One day it happened that "Jumps" searching for dead sticks came along under the sycamore-trees and saw Jack, and Bevis and Mark swimming. He watched them some time with his dull glazing eyes, and a day or two afterwards opened his mouth



about it. "Never seed nobody do thuck afore," he said, repeating it a score of times as his class do, impressing an idea on others by reiteration, as it takes so much iteration to impress it on them. "Never saw any one do that before."

For seventy harvests he had laboured in that place, and never once gone out of sight of the high Down yonder, and in all that seventy years no one till Bevis and Mark, and now their pupil Jack, had learned to swim. Bevis's governor was out of the question, he had crossed the seas. But of the true country-folk, of all who dwelt round about those waters, not one had learned to swim. Very likely no one had learned since the Norman conquest. When the forests were enclosed and the commonalty forbidden to hunt, the spirit of enterprising exercise died out of them. Certainly it is a fact that until quite recently you might search a village from end to end and not find a swimmer, and most probably if you found one now he would be something of a traveller and not a home-staying man.

Tom, the ploughboy and bird-keeper, with his companions, the other plough-lads and young men, sometimes bathed in summer in the brook far down the meadows, splashing like blackbirds in the shallow water, running to and fro on the sward under

the grey-leaved willows with the sunshine on their limbs. I delight to see them, they look Greek; I wish some one would paint them, with the brimming brook, the willows pondering over it, the pointed flags, the sward, and buttercups, the distant flesh-tints in the sunlight under the grey leaves. But this was not swimming. "Never saw any one do that before," said the man of seventy harvests.

Under the oak he stood as Bevis and Mark passed that October morning. His hand was like wood upon wood, and as he leaned against the oak, his knees were bent one way and his back the other, and thus stiff and crooked and standing with an effort supported by the tree, it seemed as if he had been going as a beast of the field upon all fours and had hoisted himself upright with difficulty. Something in the position, in the hoary tree, and the greyish hue of his dress gave the impression of an arboreal animal.

But against the tree there leaned also a long slender pole, "teeled up" as "Jumps" would have said, and at the end of the pole was a hook. The old man had permission to collect the dead wood, and the use of his crook was to tear down the decaying branches for which he was now looking. A crook is a very simple instrument—the mere branch

of a tree will often serve as a crook—but no arboreal animal has ever used a crook. Ah! “Jumps,” poor decaying “Jumps,” with lengthened narrow experience like a long footpath, with glazing eyes, crooked knee, and stiffened back, there was a something in thee for all that, the unseen difference that is all in all, the wondrous mind, the soul.

Up in the sunshine a lark sung fluttering his wings; he arose from the earth, his heart was in the sky. Shall not the soul arise?

Past the oak Bevis and Mark walked beside the hedge upon their way. Frost, and sunshine after had reddened the hawthorn sprays, and already they could see through the upper branches—red with haws—for the grass was strewn with the leaves from the exposed tops of the bushes. On the orange maples there were bunches of rosy-winged keys. There was a gloss on the holly leaf, and catkins at the tips of the leafless birch. As the leaves fell from the horse-chestnut boughs the varnished sheaths of the buds for next year appeared; so there were green buds on the willows, black tips to the ash saplings, green buds on the sycamores. They waited asleep in their sheaths till Orion strode the southern sky and Arcturus rose in the East.

Slender larch boughs were coated with the yellow fluff of the decaying needles. Brown fern, shrivelled rush tip, grey rowen grass at the verge of the ditch showed that frost had wandered thither in the night. By the pond the brown bur-marigolds drooped, withering to seed, their dull disks like lesser sunflowers without the sunflower's colour. There was a beech which had been orange, but was now red from the topmost branch to the lowest, redder than the squirrels which came to it. Two or three last buttercups flowered in the grass, and on a furze bush there were a few pale yellow blossoms not golden as in spring, but pale.

Thin threads of gossamer gleamed, the light ran along their loops as they were lifted by the breeze, and the sky was blue over the buff oaks. Jays screeched in the oaks looking for acorns, and there came the muffled tinkle of a sheep-bell. A humble-bee buzzed across their path, warmed into aimless life by the sun from his frost-chill of the night—buzzed across and drifted against a hawthorn branch. There he clung and crept about the branch, his raft in the sunshine, as men chilled at sea cling and creep about their platform of beams in the waste of waves. His feeble force was almost spent.

The sun shone and his rays fell on red hawthorn

spray, on yellow larch bough, on brown fern, rush tip, and grey grass, on red beech and yellow gorse, on broad buff oaks and orange maple, and on the gleaming pond. Wheresoever there was the least colour the sun's rays flew like a bee to a flower, and drew from it a beauty as they drew the song from the lark.

The wind came from the blue sky with drifting skeins of mist in it like those which curled in summer's dawn over the waters of the New Sea, the wind came and their blood glowed as they walked. King October reigned, and the wind of his mantle as he drew it about him puffed the leaves from the trees. June is the queen of the months, and October is king. "Busk ye and bowne ye my merry men all : " sharpen your arrows and string your bows ; set ye in order and march, march to the woods away.

The wind came and rippled their blood into a glow, as it rippled the water. A lissom steely sense strung their sinews ; their backs felt like oak-plants, upright, sturdy but not rigid ; their frames charged with force. This fierce sense of life is like the glow in the furnace where the draught comes ; there's a light in the eye like the first star through the evening blue.

Afar above a flock of rooks soared, winding round

and round a geometrical staircase in the air, with outstretched wings like leaves upborne and slowly rotating edge first. The ploughshare was at work under them planing the stubble and filling the breeze with the scent of the earth. Over the ploughshare they soared and danced in joyous measure.

Upon the tops of the elms the redwings sat—high-flying thrushes with a speck of blood under each wing—and called “kuck—quck” as they approached. When they came to the mound Bevis went one side of the hedge and Mark the other. Then at a word Pan rushed into the mound like a javelin, splintering the dry hollow “gix” stalks, but a thorn pierced his shaggy coat and drew a “yap” from him.

At that the hare waited no longer, but lightly leaped from the mound thirty yards ahead. Bound! Bound! Bevis poised his gun, got the dot on the fleeting ears, and the hare rolled over and was still. So they passed October, sometimes seeing a snipe on a sandy shallow of the brook under a willow as they came round a bend. The wild-fowl began to come to the New Sea, but these were older and wilder, and not easy to shoot.

One day as they were out rowing in the Pinta

they saw the magic wave, and followed it up, till Mark shot the creature that caused it, and found it to be a large diving bird. Several times Bevis fired at herons as they came over. Towards the evening as they were returning homewards now and then one would pass, and though he knew the height was too much he could not resist firing at such a broad mark as the wide wings offered. The heron, perhaps touched, but unharmed by the pellets whose sting had left them, almost tumbled with fright, but soon recovered his gravity and resumed his course.

Somewhat later the governor having business in London took Bevis and Mark with him. They stayed a week at Bevis's grandpa's, and while there, for Bevis's special pleasure, the governor went with them one evening to see a celebrated American sportsman shoot. This pale-face from the land of the Indians quite upset and revolutionized all their ideas of how to handle a gun.

The perfection of first-rate English weapons, their accuracy and almost absolute safety, has obtained for them pre-eminence over all other fire-arms. It was in England that the art of shooting was slowly brought to the delicate precision which enables the sportsman to kill right and left in instantaneous succession. But why then did this one thing escape

discovery? Why have so many thousands shot season after season without hitting upon it? The governor did not like his philosophy of the gun upset in this way; his cherished traditions overthrown.

There the American stood on the stage as calm as a tenor singer, and every time the glass ball was thrown up, smash! a single rifle-bullet broke it. A single bullet, not shot, not a cartridge which opens out and makes a pattern a foot in diameter, but one single bullet. It was shooting flying with a rifle. It was not once, twice, thrice, but tens and hundreds. The man's accuracy of aim seemed inexhaustible.

Never was there any exhibition so entirely genuine: never anything so bewildering to the gunner bred in the traditionary system of shooting. A thousand rifle-bullets pattering in succession on glass balls jerked in the air would have been past credibility if it had not been witnessed by crowds. The word of a few spectators only would have been disbelieved.

"It is quite upside down, this," said the governor. "Really one would think the glass balls burst of themselves."

"He could shoot partridges flying with his rifle," said Mark.

Bevis said nothing but sat absorbed in the exhi-



bition till the last shot was fired and they rose from their seats, then he said, "I know how he did it!"

"Nonsense."

"I'm sure I do: I saw it in a minute."

"Well, how then?"

"I'll tell you when we get home."

"Pooh!"

"Wait and see."

Nothing more was said till they reached home, when half scornfully they inquired in what the secret lay?

"The secret is in this," said Bevis, holding out his left arm. "That's the secret."

"How? I don't see."

"He puts his left arm out nearly as far as he can reach," said Bevis, "and holds the gun almost by the muzzle. That's how he does it. Here, see—like this."

He took up his grandfather's gun which was a muzzle-loader and had not been shot off these thirty years, and put it to his shoulder, stretching out his left arm and grasping the barrels high up beyond the stock. His long arm reached within a few inches of the muzzle.

"There!" he said.

“Well, it was like that,” said Mark. “He certainly did hold the gun like that.”

“But what is the difference?” said the governor. “I don’t see how it’s done now.”

“But I do,” said Bevis. “Just think: if you hold the gun out like this, and put your left arm high up as near the muzzle as you can, you put the muzzle on the mark directly instead of having to move it about to find it. And that’s it, I’m sure. I saw that was how he held it directly, and then I thought it out.”

“Let me,” said Mark. He had the gun and tried, aiming quickly at an object on the mantelpiece. “So you can—you put the barrels right on it.”

“Give it to me,” said the governor. He tried, twice, thrice, throwing the gun up quickly.

“Keep your left hand in one place,” said Bevis. “Not two places—don’t move it.”

“I do believe he’s right,” said the governor.

“Of course I am,” said Bevis in high triumph. “I’m sure that’s it.”

“So am I,” said Mark.

“Well, really now I come to try, I think it is,” said the governor.

“It’s like a rod on a pivot,” said Bevis. “Don’t you see the left hand is the pivot: if you hold it out

as far as you can, then the long part of the rod is your side of the pivot, and the short little piece is beyond it—then you've only got to move that little piece. If you shoot in our old way then the long piece is the other side of the pivot, and of course the least motion makes such a difference. Here, where's some paper—I can see it, if you can't."

With his pencil he drew a diagram, being always ready to draw maps and plans of all kinds. He drew it on the back of a card that chanced to lie on the table.

"There, that long straight stroke, that's the line of the gun—it's three inches long—now, see, put A at the top, and B at the bottom like they do in geometry. Now make a dot C on the line just an inch above B. Now suppose B is where the stock touches your shoulder, and this dot C is where your hand holds the gun in our old way at home. Then, don't you see, the very least mistake at C, ever so little, increases at A—ratio is the right word, increases in rapid ratio, and by the time the shot gets to the bird it's half a yard one side."

"I see," said Mark. "Now do the other."

"Rub out the dot at C," said Bevis. "I haven't got any indiarubber, you suppose it's rubbed out: now put the dot, two inches above B, and only one

inch from the top of the gun at A. That's how he held it with his hand at this dot, say D."

"I think he did," said the governor.

"Now you think," said Bevis. "It takes quite a sweep, quite a movement to make the top A incline much out of the perpendicular. I mean if the pivot, that's your hand, is at D a little mistake does not increase anything like so rapidly. So its much more easy to shoot straight quick."

They considered this some while till they got to understand it. All the time Bevis's mind was working to try and find a better illustration, and at last he snatched up the governor's walking-stick. The knob or handle he held in his right hand, and that represented the butt of the gun which is pressed against the shoulder. His right hand he rested on the table, keeping it still as the shoulder would be still. Then he took the stick with the thumb and finger of his left hand about one third of the length of the stick up. That was about the place where a gun would be held in the ordinary way.

"Now look," he said, and keeping his right hand firm, he moved his left an inch or so aside. The inch at his hand increased to three or four at the point of the stick. This initial error in the aim

would go on increasing till at forty yards the widest spread of shot would miss the mark.

“And now this way,” said Bevis. He slipped his left hand up the stick to within seven or eight inches of the point. This represented the new position. A small error here—or lateral motion of the hand—only produced a small divergence. The muzzle, the top of the stick, only varied from the straight line the amount of the actual movement of the left hand. In the former case a slight error of the hand multiplied itself at the muzzle. This convinced them.

“How we shall shoot!” said Mark. “We shall beat Jack hollow!”

They returned home two days afterwards, and immediately tried the experiment with their double-barrels. It answered perfectly. As Bevis said, the secret was in the left arm.

When about to shoot grasp the gun at once with the left hand as high up the barrel as possible without inconveniently straining the muscles, and so bring it to the shoulder. Push the muzzle up against the mark, as if the muzzle were going to actually touch it. The left hand aims, positively putting the muzzle on the game. All is centred in the left hand. The left hand must at once with the very

first movement take hold high up, and must not be slid there, it must take hold high up as near the muzzle as possible without straining. The left hand is thrust out, and as it were put on the game. Educate the left arm; teach it to correspond instantaneously with the direction of the glance; teach it to be absolutely stable for the three necessary seconds; let the mind act through the left wrist. The left hand aims.

This is with the double-barrel shot gun; with the rifle at short sporting ranges the only modification is that as there is but one pellet instead of two hundred, the sight must be used and the dot put on the mark, while with the shot gun in time you scarcely use the sight at all. With the rifle the sight must never be forgotten. The left hand puts the sight on the mark, and the quicker the trigger is pressed the better, exactly reversing tradition. A slow deliberative rifleman was always considered the most successful, but with the new system the fire cannot be delivered too quickly, the very instant the sight is on the mark, thus converting the rifleman into a snap-shooter. Of course it is always understood that this applies to short sporting ranges, the method is for sporting only, and does not apply to long range.

One caution is necessary in shooting like this with the double-barrel. Be certain that you use a first-class weapon, quite safe. The left hand being nearly at the top of the barrel, the left hand itself, and the whole length of the left arm are exposed in case of the gun bursting. I feel that some cheap guns are not quite safe. With a good gun by a known maker there is no danger.

The American has had many imitators, but no one has reached his degree of excellence in the new art which he invented. Perhaps it is fortunate that it is not every one who can achieve such marvellous dexterity, for such shooting would speedily empty every cover in this country.

Big Jack learned the trick from them in a very short time. His strong left arm was as steady as a rock. He tried it with his little rifle, and actually killed a hare, which he started from a furze bush, as it ran with a single bullet. But the governor though convinced would not adopt the new practice. He adhered to the old way, the way he had learned as a boy. What we learn in youth influences us through life.

But Bevis and Mark, and Big Jack used it with tremendous effect in snap-shooting in lanes where the game ran or flew across, in ferreting when the

rabbits bolted from hole to hole, in snipe shooting, in hedge-hunting, one each side—the best of all sport, for you do not know what may turn out next, a hare, a rabbit, a partridge from the dry ditch, or a woodcock from the dead leaves.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION—CONCLUSION.

THE winter remained mild till early in January when the first green leaves had appeared on the woodbine. One evening Polly announced that it was going to freeze, for the cat as he sat on the hearthrug had put his paw over his ear. If he sat with his back to the fire, that was a sign of rain. If he put his paw over his ear that indicated frost.

It did freeze and hard. The wind being still, the New Sea was soon frozen over except in two places. There was a breathing-hole in Fir-Tree Gulf about fifty or sixty yards from the mouth of the Nile. The channel between New Formosa and Serendib did not "catch," perhaps the current from Sweet River Falls was the cause, and though they could skate up within twenty yards, they could not land on the islands. Jack and Frances came to skate day after day; Bevis and Mark with Ted, Cecil, and the rest fought hockey battles for hours together.

One afternoon, being a little tired, Bevis sat on the ice, and presently lay down for a moment at full length, when looking along the ice—as he looked along his gun—he found he could see sticks or stones or anything that chanced to be on it a great distance off. Trying it again he could see the skates of some people very nearly half a mile distant, though his eyes were close to the surface, even if he placed the side of his head actually on the ice. The skates gleamed in the sun, and he could see them distinctly; sticks lying on the ice were not clearly seen so far as that, but a long way, so that the ice seemed perfectly level.

As the sun sank the ice became rosy, reflecting the light in the sky; the distant Downs too were tinted the same colour. After it was dark Bevis got a lantern which Mark took five or six hundred yards up the ice, and then set it down on the surface. Bevis put his face on the ice as he had done in the afternoon and looked along. His idea was to try and see for how far the lantern would be visible, as the sticks and skates had been visible a good way, he supposed the light would be apparent very much farther.

Instead of which, when he had got into position and looked along the ice with his face touching it,

the lantern had quite disappeared, yet it was not so far off as he had seen the skates—skates are only an inch or so high, and the candle in the lantern was four or five. He skated two hundred yards nearer, and then tried. At this distance, with his eyes as close to the ice as he could get them, he could not see the light itself, but there was a glow diffused in the air where he knew it was.

This explained why the light disappeared. There was a faint and invisible mist above the ice—the ice-blink—which at a long distance concealed the lantern. If he lifted his head about eighteen inches he could see the light so that the stratum of mist, or ice-blink, appeared to be about eighteen inches in thickness. When he skated another hundred yards closer he could just see the light with his face on the ice as he had done the skates by day. So that after sunset it was evident this mist formed in the air just above the ice. Mark tried the same experiment with the same result, and they then skated slowly homewards, for as it was not moonlight they might get a fall by coming against a piece of twig half-sunk in and frozen firmly.

Suddenly there was a sound like the boom of a cannon, and a crack shot across the broad water from shore to shore. The “who-hoo-whoop” of

the noise echoed back from the wood on the hill, and then they heard it again in the coombes and valleys, rolling along. As the ice was four or five inches thick it parted with a hollow roar : the crack sometimes forked, and a second running report followed the first. Sometimes the crack seemed to happen simultaneously all across the water. Occasionally they could hear it coming, and with a distinct interval of time before it reached them.

Up through these cracks or splits a little water oozed, and freezing on the surface formed barriers of rough ice from shore to shore, which jarred the skates as they passed over. These splits in no degree impaired the strength of the ice. Later on as they retired they opened the window and heard the boom again, weird and strange in the silence of the night.

One day a rabbit was started from a bunch of frozen rushes by the shore, and they chased it on the ice, overtaking it with ease. They could have knocked it down with their hockey sticks, but forebore to do so. From these rush-bunches they now and then flushed dab-chicks or lesser grebes which, when there is open water, cannot be got to fly.

Till now the air had been still, but presently the wind blew from the south almost a gale, this was

straight down the water, so keeping their skates together and spreading out their coats for sails they drove before the wind at a tremendous pace, flying past the trees and accumulating such velocity that their ankles ached from the vibration of the skates. Nor could they stop by any other means than describing a wide circle, and so gradually facing the wind. Bevis began to make an ice-raft to slide on runners and go before the wind with a sail like the ice-yachts on the American lakes.

But by the time the frame was put together, and the blacksmith had finished the runners, a thaw set in. It is just the same with sleighs, directly the sleigh is got to work, the snow goes and leaves the heaviest and muddiest road of the year. The ice-yachts of America must give splendid sport; it is said that they sometimes glide at the rate of a mile a minute, actually out-stripping the speed of the wind which drives them. This has been rather a puzzle why it should be so.

May it not be the same as it was with Bevis and Mark when they spread their coats like sails and flew before the gale with such speed that it needed some nerve to stand upright—till the vibration of the skates caused a peculiar numblike feeling in the ankles? They either did or seemed to go faster than

the wind, and was not this the accumulation of velocity? As a bullet dropped from a window falls so many feet the first second, and a great many more the next second, increasing its pace, so as they were thrust forwards by the wind their bodies accumulated the impetus and shot beyond it. Possibly it is the same with the swift ice-yacht. The thaw was a great disappointment.

The immense waves of ocean rise before the wind, and so the wind rushing over the ice no longer firm and rigid quickly broke up the surface, and there was a tremendous grinding and splintering, and chafing of the fragments. For the first few days these were carried down the New Sea, but presently the wind changed. The black north swooped on the earth and swept across the waters. Fields, trees, woods, hills, the very houses looked dark and hard, the water grey, the sky cold and dusky. The broken ice drifted before it and was all swept up to the other end of the New Sea and jammed between and about the islands. They could now get at the *Pinta*, and resolved to have a sail.

“An arctic expedition!”

“Antarctic—it is south!”

“All right.”

“Let us go to New Formosa.”

“So we will. But the ice is jammed there.”

“Cut through it.”

“Make an ice-bow.”

“Be quick.”

Up in the workshop they quickly nailed two short boards together like a V. This was lashed to the stem of the *Pinta* to protect her when they crashed into the ice. They took a reef in the mainsail, for though the wind does not seem to travel any swifter, yet in winter it somehow feels more hard and compact and has a greater power on what it presses against. Just before they cast loose, Frances appeared on the bank above, she had called at the house, and hearing what they were about, hastened up to join the expedition. So soon as she had got a comfortable seat, well wrapped up in sealskin and muff, they pushed off, and the *Pinta* began to run before the wind. It was very strong, much stronger than it had seemed ashore, pushing against the sail as if it were a solid thing. The waves followed, and the grey cold water lapped at the stern.

Beyond the battle-field as they entered the broadest and most open part the black north roared and rushed at them, as if the pressure of the sky descending forced a furious blast between it and the

surface. Angry and repellent waves hissed as their crests blew off in cold foam and spray, stinging their cheeks. Ahead the red sun was sinking over New Formosa, they raced towards the disc, the sail straining as if it would split. As the boat drew near they saw the ice jammed in the channel between the two islands.

It was thin and all in fragments; some under water, some piled by the waves above the rest, some almost perpendicular, like a sheet of glass standing upright and reflecting the red sunset. Against the cliff the waves breaking threw fragments of ice smashed into pieces; ice and spray rushed up the steep sand and slid down again. But it was between the islands that the waves wreaked their fury. The edge of the ice was torn into jagged bits which dashed against each other, their white saw-like points now appearing, now forced under by a larger block.

Farther in the ice heaved as the waves rolled under: its surface was formed of plates placed like a row of books fallen aside. As the ice heaved these plates slid on each other, while others underneath striving to rise to the surface struck and cracked them. Down came the black north as a man might bring a sledge-hammer on the anvil, the waves



hissed, and turned darker, a white sea-gull (which had come inland) rose to a higher level with easy strokes of its wings.

Splinter—splinter! Crash! grind, roar; a noise like thousands of gnashing teeth.

“O!” said Frances, dropping her muff, and putting her hands to her ears. “It is Dante!”

Bevis had his hand on the tiller; Mark his on the halyard of the mainsail; neither spoke, it looked doubtful. The next instant the Pinta struck the ice midway between the islands, and the impetus with which she came drove her six or seven feet clear into the splintering fragments. They were jerked forwards, and in an instant the following wave broke over the stern, and then another, flooding the bottom of the boat. Mark had the mainsail down, for it would have torn the mast out.

With a splintering, grinding, crashing, roaring, a horrible and inexpressible noise of chaos—an orderless, rhythmless noise of chaos—the mass gave way and swept slowly through the channel. The impact of the boat acted like a battering-ram and started the jam. Fortunate it was for them that it did so, or the boat might have been swamped by the following waves. Bevis got out a scull, so did Mark, and their exertions kept her straight; had she turned

broadside it would have been awkward even as it was. They swept through the channel, the ice at its edges barking willow branches and planing the shore, large plates were forced up high and dry.

“Hurrah!” shouted Mark.

“Hurrah!”

At the noise of their shouting thousands of starlings rose from the osiers on Serendib with a loud rush of wings, blackening the air like a cloud. They were soon through the channel, the ice spread in the open water, and they worked the boat under shelter of New Formosa, and landed.

“You are wet,” said Bevis as he helped Frances out.

“But it’s jolly!” said Frances, laughing. “Only think what a fright *he* would have been in if he had known!”

Having made the boat safe—there was a lot of water in her—they walked along the old path, now covered with dead leaves damp from the thaw, to the stockade. The place was strewn with small branches whirled from the trees by the gales, and in the hut and further corner of the cave were heaps of brown oak leaves which had drifted in. Nothing else had changed; so well had they built

it that the roof had neither broken down nor been destroyed by the winds.

During the frost a blackbird had roosted in a corner of the hut under the rafters, sparrows too had sought its shelter, and wrens and blue-tits had crept into the crevices of the eaves. Next they went up on the cliff, the sun-dial stood as they had left it, but the sun was now down.

From the height, where they could hardly stand against the wind, they saw a figure afar on the green hill by the sycamores, which they knew must be Big Jack waiting for them to return. Walking back to the *Pinta* they passed under the now leafless teak-tree marked and scored by the bullets they had fired at it.

Before embarking they baled out the water in the boat, and then inclined her, first one side and then the other, to see if she had sprung a leak, but she had not. The ice-bow was then hoisted on board, as it would no longer be required, and would impede their sailing. Frances stepped in, and Bevis and Mark settled themselves to row out of the channel. With such a wind it was impossible to tack in the narrow strait between the islands. They had to pull their very hardest to get through. So soon as they had got an offing the sculls were

shipped, and the sails hoisted, but before they could get them to work they were blown back within thirty yards of the cliff. Then the sails drew, and they forged ahead.

It was the roughest voyage they had ever had. The wind was dead against them, and no matter on which tack every wave sent its spray, and sometimes the whole of its crest over the bows. The shock sometimes seemed to hold the *Pinta* in mid-career, and her timbers trembled. Then she leaped forward and cut through, showering the spray aside. Frances laughed and sang, though the words were inaudible in the hiss and roar and the rush of the gale through the rigging, and the sharp, whip-like cracks of the fluttering pennant.

The velocity of their course carried them to and fro the darkening waters in a few minutes, but the dusk fell quickly, and by the time they had reached *Fir-Tree Gulf*, where they could get a still longer "leg" or tack, the evening gloom had settled down. *Big Jack* stood on the shore, and beckoned them to come in: they could easily have landed Frances under the lee of the hill, but she said she should go all the way now. So they tacked through the *Mozambique*, past *Thessaly* and the bluff, the waves getting less in size as they

approached the northern shore, till they glided into the harbour. Jack had walked round and met them. He held out his hand, and Frances sprang ashore. "How *could* you?" he said, in a tone of indignant relief. To him it had looked a terrible risk.

"Why it was splendid!" said Frances, and they went on together towards Longcot. Bevis and Mark stayed to furl sails, and leave the Pinta ship-shape. By the time they had finished it was already dark: the night had come.

On their way home they paused a moment under the great oak at the top of the Home Field, and looked back. The whole south burned with stars. There was a roar in the oak like the thunder of the sea. The sky was black, black as velvet, the black north had come down, and the stars shone and burned as if the wind reached and fanned them into flame.

Large Sirius flashed; vast Orion strode the sky, lording the heavens with his sword. A scintillation rushed across from the zenith to the southern horizon. The black north held down the buds, but there was a force in them already that must push out in leaf as Arcturus rose in the East. Listening to the loud roar of the oak as the strength of the north wind filled them,—

“I should like to go straight to the real great sea like the wind,” said Mark.

“We *must* go to the great sea,” said Bevis.  
“Look at Orion!”

The wind went seawards, and the stars are always over the ocean.

THE END.

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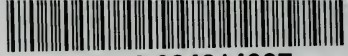












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